

8 Reasons Why Refresher Training Is a Good Idea

Safety Training

Refresher training helps keep important knowledge fresh and current.

Whether you're a student or a teacher, one thing we all know for personal experience is that knowledge fades over time. Our brains are very efficient at dumping information we don't need, and the best way we have of showing our brain that that information is still useful is by using it. It's a classic case of "use it or lose it."

What this means for learning is that most of us need a review of important concepts from time to time. And this is where refresher courses come into play. A refresher course is designed to bring learners back to the basics, so that they can review some of the fundamentals they may have forgotten, or brush up on new information they may not be aware of.

There are several reasons why refresher training is so important. A few of them include:

1. IT BUILDS LONG-TERM MEMORY.

Our memory is like a muscle. In order to strengthen it, we need to keep it challenged. The best way to train our memory is to test how long we can go before we start to forget something. It's easy to remember something you only heard a couple seconds ago. The longer the interval between first hearing a piece of information and having to recall it, the better we remember it. Offering a refresher course plays into this by challenging your learners to recall information they may not have thought about for several months.

2. IT REDUCES MISTAKES AND IMPROVES PRODUCTIVITY.

Refresher courses are like a fire drill. When we review processes and procedures until following them becomes second nature, we're less likely to mess up in a place where it counts. Practice makes perfect, and in some ways, that's exactly what a refresher course is.

3. IT OFFERS AN EFFECTIVE WARMUP FOR STUDENTS OR EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE

TAKEN A BREAK.

Life happens. Your learners may take time off a course of study to handle personal issues at home. Your employees will go on maternity leave, or take a hiatus, or be out sick. After a few months off the job, they'll be a bit rusty. Design your refresher course to bring them back up to speed.

4. IT KEEPS COWORKERS ON THE SAME PAGE AND MAKES LEARNING PART OF THE CULTURE.

Good things happen when companies make learning part of the culture. Not only does it keep the knowledge and expertise of the company running at top levels, but it shows employees that they are valuable.

However, for this to really work well, everyone needs access to learning opportunities. Industries, technology, and company protocols change over time. If your new hires are learning one set of rules and best practices, it may put them in conflict with the old guard who learned something

completely different. Company-wide refresher courses help keep the whole culture in step.

5. IT KEEPS EMPLOYEES UP-TO-DATE ON INDUSTRY TRAINING.

Speaking of industry change, refresher training offers the perfect opportunity to keep your employees on the cutting edge of any new developments. This is especially important in technical fields, where the industry evolves so rapidly that being behind by even a few months can have negative consequences for your business.

As an expert in your own field, you should be able to identify the biggest changes as they happen. Keep track of these and be ready to go over them in your refresher course.

6. IT HELPS LEARNERS REMEMBER IMPORTANT BUT SELDOM-USED INFORMATION.

You may have heard of the Urgent/Important matrix in decision making. The idea behind it is that you should prioritize tasks that are urgent and important first while avoiding tasks that are both unimportant and also not urgent. The trick lies in striking the appropriate balance between the urgent and

unimportant tasks, and the non-urgent but still important tasks.

There are plenty of urgent tasks that, while not incredibly important, still need to happen—like responding to an email, for instance. But there are a lot of things that are non-urgent because they rarely come up, but which would be incredibly urgent if the need to do something about them ever arose. A refresher course can keep that information sharp in your learners' memory so that they aren't caught flat-footed in a time of need.

7. IT DEVELOPS MANAGERS INTO FUTURE INSTRUCTORS—AND VICE VERSA.

They say that the best way to learn is to teach. If you're trying to find good managers for your business, asking select employees to run the training program is a great way to find qualified candidates. The ability to guide learners through a refresher course is good training for a more prominent manager position. After all, a bad manager gives orders, but a good manager gives instructions.

8. IT IDENTIFIES KNOWLEDGE GAPS AND TRAINING NEEDS.

Finally, a refresher course is the perfect way to suss out and remedy deficiencies in the

current training protocols. If you begin running a refresher program and notice that employees are consistently receiving low scores in a portion of the program, that's a sign that you need to offer more support in that area of training.

It may be that your original on-boarding procedures didn't cover that area thoroughly, or that you're dealing with an edge case scenario. Either way, spotting the gap means you can fill it before it becomes a potential problem.

Giving your learners a "why" provides motivation for the future.

Despite the obvious utility of refresher training, it's not uncommon to meet resistance. Most of us don't like going over old material, because it can feel like a waste of time. The benefits of a refresher course can be lost on many of us if we aren't aware of how close we came to forgetting material that the refresher course was just in time to help us remember.

That's why it's important to start with a strong "why." Give your learners a good reason to take the course, and they'll be more committed. And if they understand the reasoning and are enthusiastic about the course, they'll be more

successful in taking it as well.

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Source: <https://www.learndash.com/8-reasons-why-refresher-training-is-a-good-idea/>