Employee Training Strategies

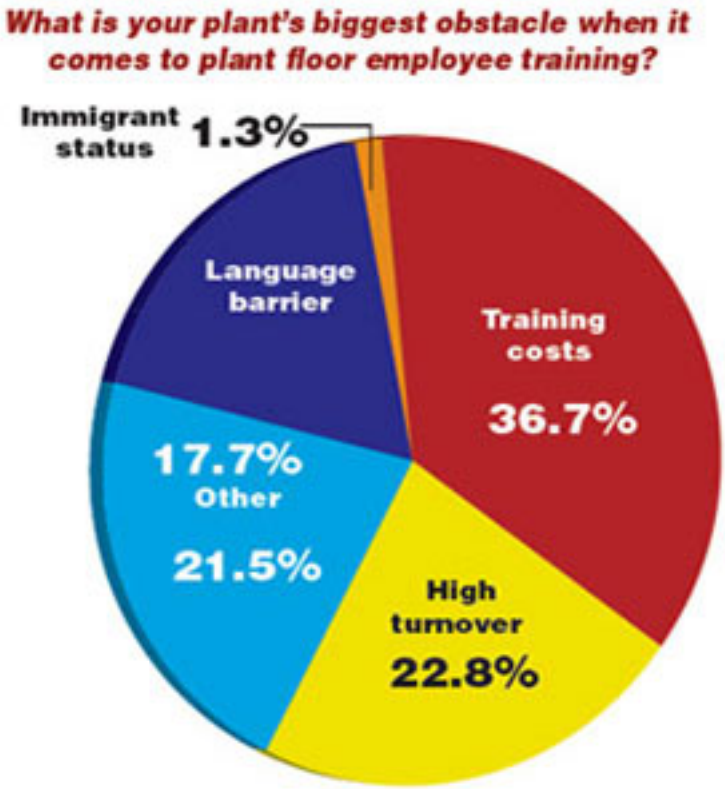
Proper employee training is crucial to the success of any company undertaking the mass production of goods. This is especially true in the food manufacturing industry, due to the time constraints imposed by the inherent perishable nature of the products, the regulatory compulsion to remain FDA compliant and the slim profit margins making production downtime a serious budgetary concern.

A survey of Food Manufacturing readers found that just under one third find training employees to be the most difficult part of their facility's employment process, results that have held stable from a similar survey conducted last year. But while difficult, employee training has proven invaluable in the industry. The chart at right illustrates the myriad benefits of employee training as seen by Food Manufacturing readers.

Though survey respondents acknowledge the need for and understand the benefits of employee education and training, the graph below illustrates some of the hurdles that must be overcome in order to implement training procedures. Of the 22 percent of readers who selected "other" as the biggest obstacle to plant-floor training, a full 58 percent indicated that time constraints are the greatest challenge they face. Readers report that, despite the difficulties of training and educating employees, the following programs are active in their facilities:

- Industrial safety (fire and electrical compliance, personal protective

equipment) — 92%
- Equipment-specific training — 91%
- Mandated workplace training (sexual harassment, workplace violence) — 86%
- Compliance training (government regulations) — 71%
- Company background/mission — 54%
- Maintenance procedures — 44%



Over half of Food Manufacturing readers (53 percent) also report that employee training is an ongoing process and not simply a new-hire orientation. Considering that exactly half of surveyed readers report average employee retention of six or more years, a commitment to ongoing training is no small thing. And according to the results of this survey, continued training is beneficial to both the facilities and to the employees themselves, as 71 percent of respondents report that employees who become proficient in their present jobs are advanced to positions requiring higher skill levels.

In an effort to help employees acquire and retain the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in their jobs, Food Manufacturing readers report employing a number of educational strategies. Readers report utilizing the following training tools:

- In-plant instruction — 92%
- Group instruction — 73%
- Handouts/manuals — 72%
- Videos — 71%
- Web-based programs — 28%
- Outside Classes — 27%

The results of our reader survey indicate that training employees in food manufacturing's high-efficiency, low-downtime environment is exceedingly difficult, but that manufacturers understand the need and value of adequate training procedures and are employing various media in order to keep their employees educated and proficient in a variety of areas.

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