

Practical Way to Apply Training

Many of us have taken a myriad of classes over the past year, most of which were held virtually due to COVID-19. Because of the pandemic, everybody was being told to catch up on training while the shop was slow and new training opportunities were popping up every day. I facilitated a variety of courses myself for several different groups and organizations to feed the training machine. After talking with friends at I-CAR and Automotive Management Institute, I learned how they saw their training numbers increase as people were putting their spare time to good use. I believe COVID-19 did give us some “free” time and occupying it with training is probably the best use of it, but I have a question: How are you applying all of that training?

Back in my shop days when I attended a course, I left afterwards with a large binder of information. During the course we made notes in the binder, annotated action steps and made a commitment on how we would implement the processes covered. I always thought it was overwhelming to try implementing everything I was taught during any training, and most often I received pushback from my employees when I showed them the book of knowledge I was going to employ. Looking back on the virtual courses provided over the last year, I know I presented courses on five different subjects with some of the same people attending different courses, causing me to wonder how they have applied the training.

As I facilitate a course, I tell attendees to think about their shop as they are learning to listen for things that they can identify as concerns. This allows them to focus on areas that can bring them the most value as I know everything is not broken in their shop. Most often they are trying to gain information to tune up the areas that are weak.

I was doing some follow-up with a shop employee the other day that took one of our Vision+ University courses and asked what she had been able to implement. She said that she was working on scheduling as she knew that was a problem in her shop, so when I discussed focusing attention on items of concern, she listened for ways to fix the problem at hand. By using the information gained in the course, she was able to implement some changes. While there was more to the course than scheduling, correcting it helped align her processes with the course’s main focus of improving production.

Many courses have an overall theme. It could be improving production, damage appraisal documentation or paint material profitability, but within the overall theme there are secondary thoughts that might be more important than the overall theme. As you go through a particular course, make note of the items you can apply right away – things that would require some changes to implement and others requiring additional training for yourself or your staff to develop a successful game plan in applying the training.

I was once facilitating a paint material profitability course and as I started talking about waste, a person in the back of the room said, “That is my problem right there. I didn’t realize it until now, but I know from listening to you that we are mixing too much paint.”

As we continued the conversation, he talked about how he could improve documenting repair procedures and improve paint hours per RO, but he was sure his painter had more than two

ounces of material left in his paint cup and that is where he wanted to focus. When we concluded the course, he knew exactly what he needed to work on, and it was only a small percentage of what the presentation had covered.

Training must be applied to be valuable. Throughout our discussion, my plan was to show you that it is not necessary to absorb everything presented, but to rather pull pieces from the course that make sense to your business. One example was the Vision+ University course attendee who discovered that focusing on scheduling would solve some of her production issues and learned all she could by directing her questions toward scheduling. Another was the manager who understood that waste was his primary concern but was still going to work on documentation and increasing paint hours per RO. He left the course with an action plan to use tools available to him such as panel calculators and improved mixing methods to reduce waste.

Look back at the courses you have taken this past year and use the thought processes of the two people mentioned to see what you can take from the training to improve your business today. It's never too late to implement new knowledge, and the results might surprise you.