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page 10



EDUCATION  
**PASSPORT TO EXCELLENCE**  
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**LATEST ADDITIONS TO CONVENTION SCHEDULE**

pages 20-24



## Pickups Get More Towing Capacity

page 12

## Don't Kill Your Service Profits

page 27

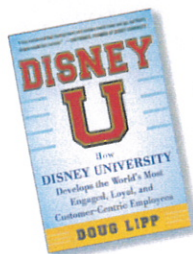




# Some Organizations Aren't Ready for Employee Training – Are You?

A Lesson from Disney University

By Doug Lipp



"Marketing is the time and money you spend to get people in the door. Training is the investment you make to get customers to come back and employees to stay. It creates loyalty in both."

– Jim Cora, retired chairman, Disneyland International

Jim Cora's comment reveals the secret behind the success of Disney's world famous employee development organization, the Disney University – unambiguous leadership support. Unfortunately, the following two situations are all too common in the business world. Both reflect a passive, victim mentality that undermines employee and organizational development. Both reflect the opposite of Cora's comments and open the door to competitors.

*Situation #1: "This weak economy is killing me. Doing more with less is the name of the game. My budgets are slashed, and I have no wiggle room."*

The resulting attitude:

- I don't have the budget, time, or people for training.
- Why train employees – they'll be gone pretty soon.

*Situation #2: "This booming economy is killing me. We're barely filling existing orders. Plus, I can't keep my good people. They jump ship as soon as someone else comes along waving a little extra money."*

The resulting attitude:

- I don't have the time or people for training.
- Why train employees – they'll be gone pretty soon.



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Aaron Vogt

"Michael Rees and Jeff Martin of "A World of Training" have been very successful in advising and training our sales staff. It's not always easy to get veterans to attempt change and accept, or for green peas to soak in the information. But with their assistance, we have been able to increase our sales and profits as well as maintain a core sales staff. I am more than satisfied with their system and their efforts.

I would recommend Jeff or Michael to anyone looking to get a unified sales process for their dealership. I wholeheartedly believe it will increase your percentages and profit.

Thank you Jeff for your continued efforts and for helping us work towards new levels of growth!"  
Aaron Vogt – Vogt RV, Ft. Worth, TX



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**"Leaders must be innovative and comfortable with risk. Leaders must provide overt, enthusiastic and sustained support. They should be cheerleaders of training."**



One situation represents a dying environment and the other a thriving environment. Yet there are surprising similarities between the resulting attitudes. The odds are good that organizations with either of these corporate attitudes don't have a history of providing useful employee training, supported by the top leaders.

The extremes of economic booms and busts will never vanish, especially in the RV industry. Newer, lighter, and more fuel-efficient down-sized trailers and motorhomes abound, yet the rollercoaster of economic boom and bust will forever create considerable stress among leaders. No one is immune. Leaders in government, business, religious institutions, non-profits and start-up organizations all face similar challenges.

Boom and bust extremes force leaders to address the following challenges:

- **Doing more with less**
- **Keeping employees engaged and motivated**
- **Reducing employee turnover**
- **Improving customer service**
- **Differentiating from the competition**

Differentiation is the ultimate goal – how to stand out as the employer-of-choice, vendor-of-choice, service-provider-of-choice or the whatever-of-choice.

Differentiating one's business by doing more with less, motivating employees, and improving customer service is now more of a constant than an anomaly. The anxiety and stress that used to be felt only during the extremes of boom and bust are now a daily reality for many.

So how does Disney University do it? With the Four Circumstances. Disney University founder Van France attributes Disney's ongoing success to these factors that keep training from being viewed as a necessary evil. The Four Circumstances are just another name for organizational values. Specifically, they call for leaders to innovate, support, educate, and entertain.

Leaders must be innovative and comfortable with risk. Leaders must provide overt, enthusiastic and sustained support. They should be cheerleaders of training! Employee education and development must be an indispensable component of the organization's culture. And employee training – ranging from the front lines to the executive suite – must be entertaining, engaging and memorable, not boring and forgettable!

Things quickly get out of control when any of these four values is jettisoned and excuses start flying. Blaming the economy is just a convenient excuse for not providing employee training.

Van France, one of my Disney mentors, was a vocal and respected cheerleader for constantly providing relevant learning opportunities for Disney's employees. Over his decades of service, he challenged many Disney executives with this rant:

"The budget has become the scapegoat for every possible negative action and rejection of any suggestion for improving things. Cutting budgets is the coward's way out of any problem."

What kind of leader are you? ■

*Excerpted from "Disney U: How Disney University Develops the World's Most Engaged, Loyal and Customer-Centric Employees"*

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