

University of North Carolina Finds Success With New Training Initiative



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

UNC Facilities

Industry – Facilities management

Established – 1793

Headquarters – Chapel Hill, NC

Footprint – Approximately 1,000 employees with diverse responsibilities spread across a 700-acre campus servicing over 200 buildings, 28,000 students, and 8,000 faculty and staff

Business Challenges

- Find a good format for training
- Overcome training as a negative stereotype

Solution Results

- Opened lines of communication across different departments
- Flexible training materials adjust to fit the immediate needs of the group
- Attendees embrace training and find value

Executive Summary

The Facilities Services Division at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is the largest department at the university with approximately 1,000 employees who handle diverse responsibilities throughout the campus. The Division professionally maintains, renovates, and improves buildings and grounds and provides quality support services for the Carolina community. It strives to be a world-class leader in the facilities services profession by setting the benchmark in excellence and continuous improvement.

Building a Flexible Foundation for Education

As part of the oldest public university in the nation, the Facilities Services Division at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is tasked with keeping many long-running wheels in motion. When C. Ray Doyle, Facilities Services training coordinator for the university, was asked to develop an ongoing training program, instead of reinventing the wheel, he reached out to contacts in similar positions at other universities. One colleague recommended he attend a National Seminars Training (NST) Speaker Showcase. Doyle attended the event and was impressed by the quality of speakers and materials offered.

Doyle wanted to see what the NST team could offer and brought a facilitator on site to provide customer service training to everyone in the Division. The trainer and topic were well-received, so Doyle worked with his STAR12 Enterprise training consultant to create a focused leadership training program for around 100 mid-level supervisors. The Supervisory Development Program that was created included a series of training modules in topics such as Management, Leadership, Communication, Coaching, Time Management and Organizational Skills, and Change Management, with NST trainers facilitating the workshops every other month. Said Doyle, "I have been impressed with the flexibility and how well the trainers adapt and adjust to fit our immediate needs; the facilitators can really think on their feet."

The leadership program has evolved to now include further upper-management training and topics that are specific and relevant to the Division's immediate needs of the moment, whatever they may be. There are also plans to grow the training to possibly include other avenues beyond the on-site training as resources become available.

Successful Results Stretch Beyond Training

The on-site training has produced positive results, beyond just the information learned in the sessions. “By bringing attendees from all areas of the campus together in one room for a shared learning experience, we have seen an adjustment or change in attitude; a culture shift where people welcome the opportunity,” said Doyle. “Before the training, many people didn’t know the person sitting next to them. Now they are interacting, finding different on-campus resources and utilizing them. When they come together, they are comparing notes and have an open line of communication. Our department is full of really good people who are smart, creative, and do a good job, and now they accept and appreciate the other group on the other side of campus.”

Climbing Over Challenges

There can be challenges when implementing a new training program, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill was no exception.

The first hurdle was finding the best method of training. Doyle evaluated different formats, online and on-site, and found on-site to be a better choice. “While there was interest in online training, with our heavy workload it was tough to find time to commit to it,” said Doyle. “However, on-site training, with a specific time and place, was easier to schedule and get participation and attendance.”

Knowing how the Division operates, Doyle had to take into account its quickly changing needs. He needed a solution that would be flexible. “I had in mind another well-known company, but they were so rigid in their program, and I knew that would not work here. The flexibility of STAR12 Enterprise is really good. That’s why I like working with them,” said Doyle. “I’ve been impressed with their willingness to seek out what is best for us and how they pay attention to what works and doesn’t work for us. We can draw from all of these top-notch facilitators, so we can always find someone who can address what we need.”

Doyle also had to overcome the misconception of training as a form of punishment within the group. “Often, training comes when something bad happens, so it gets a negative reputation. Early in the process, we received pushback from participants as to ‘why are we here, why are we being punished?’” said Doyle. “While we reassured them that this was to help them meet improvement goals, people didn’t believe the positive until they actually attended the training. As they began to learn and see the information evolve, attendees welcomed the training and looked forward to the opportunity to participate.”

Why Choose On-Site Training and NST?

The Facilities Services Division of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill chose NST because it offered the information and training needed in a program format that was flexible to fit immediate concerns as they evolved. “Our on-site training has been working great, and flexibility is the beauty of it,” said Doyle. “The Enterprise really reaches out to learn our immediate needs. The recurring trainers are viewed as part of our team and get to know us, and we get to know them, which is key to presenting relevant and timely material. Our training consultant has been here several times, and I consider her one of us. I have total confidence in her and trust her implicitly. If she makes a recommendation, I take it. It all works together, and at the end of the day, learning gets done and that is what matters the most.”

About NST

NST offers hundreds of live and online training topics for organizations, from interpersonal communication and team-building workshops to critical human resources and accounting regulatory programs, plus every management subject in between. Our sole mission is to provide the results-producing training you need, when and where you need it, and at a price that is cost-effective for you and your organization. For more information, please call 800-344-4613.