

IRON OUT THE DETAILS

Protect your team and your assets with equipment-specific training



Developing and implementing equipment-specific training activities provides a wealth of benefits to the operator and the organization; and these benefits are passed along to the company's clients. Safe and efficient equipment operation is one of the keys to reducing unnecessary operating costs as well as increasing the skills and abilities of your employees.

Identify your purpose

The first step in developing and implementing new equipment training activities is to identify your purpose and what is needed to reach your desired goal. For example, the purpose might be to:

- Reduce equipment damage costs due to improper operation
- Improve job completion times due to greater operator skills

- Reduce risk exposures through proper equipment operation

While there might be a seemingly endless list of reasons to implement equipment-specific training programs, it's important to build your activities around your stated purpose. You will find there are a variety of benefits that accrue as a direct and indirect result of accomplishing your goals.

Identify your needs

The next step is identifying your needs. This will consume more of your time when developing activities since it will require you to analyze the individual systems within your operation. You will need to consider the types of equipment you have along with the operation each is intended to perform.

It's important to verify that you have the right equipment for the job; this includes working with those responsible for fleet acquisition and your suppliers prior to setting your jobsite and employee expectations. It's difficult to train an employee, hold

them accountable and expect a specific outcome if they don't have the right tools for the job.

Aside from equipment, it's important to think about the deicing and anti-icing materials that will be used; whether you're clearing snow or ice; and the site specifications.

Understand your operators

Finally, you must understand the abilities and competencies of your operators. Getting a baseline of your operators' skills and abilities will be an important step in structuring your activities. Consider the following information when identifying needs:

Quantitative

- How many years has an operator performed snow removal operations?
- What is the employee's productivity level?
- What damages or negligence costs has the employee had relating to equipment operation?

PICK A TRAINING PLATFORM TO MATCH YOUR END GOAL

Below is a list of four possible platforms for completing training sessions, along with how they work best.

CLASSROOM

- Ideal for refresher trainings (once or twice annually)
- Individual sessions should not be longer than 3 hours
- Best for videos and presentations, and can be supplemented by a quiz
- Great as an introductory course prior to hands-on training activities

ONSITE

- Develops the skills and competencies of operators
- Should be performed seasonally prior to snow removal operations
- Allow for a complete walk-through and dry run to identify site-specific requirements
- Works well with small groups (1-6 employees); should last 3 hours or less

INDIVIDUALIZED

- Good for new employees learning detailed processes and procedures
- Training advanced skills for developed employees
- Training session length should be 2 hours maximum

SMALL GROUP

- Used for strengthening group or team culture
- Groups kept to a maximum of 6 people
- Great for training with standardizing processes in mind
- Can be used for onsite, hands-on and classroom training activities



Qualitative

- What types of equipment has the operator used for snow removal operations?
- Are they a leader among their peers relating to snow removal equipment operation?
- Do they have strengths operating specific equipment?

You can use some of these ideas to get started and add your own as you develop your list. Designating a repository that can be referenced with all this information will be extremely helpful in the long run.

Referring to the questions above, let's pick the first qualitative question and determine a need based on what equipment your operators have used for snow removal operations. You might find that 75% of your employee base knows how to use a straight-plow truck but only 25% know how to operate a front-end loader. One of your identifiable needs may be that you need to create a training platform that focuses on cross-functional training so you have more operators who can use a front-end loader.

Taking the time to define your purpose, gather information and

identify your needs will pay off, so don't take shortcuts.

Specify the training platform

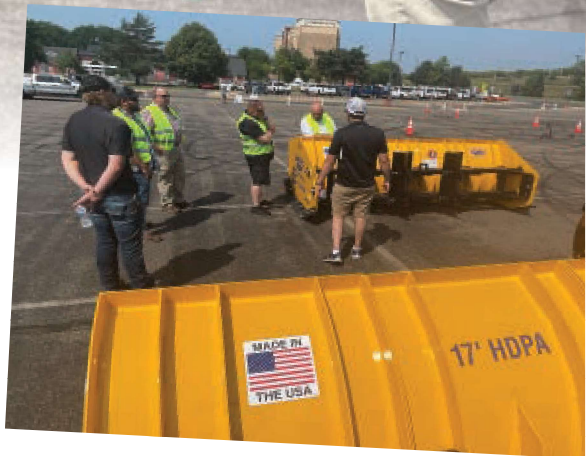
Determining the correct training platform will require you to consider options such as classroom vs. onsite training and individualized vs. group training. How you conduct your training and in what mode will influence your return on the invested time and effort.

While you can train in a variety of ways, consider using all available resources and options to carry out your plans. Other options include sending employees to vendor sessions and conferences, as well as bringing representatives in-house to perform training.

Keeping training current and interesting will help employees retain more information. Consider the type of equipment you'll be training with and make sure you have it ready to use so you can fully utilize your available training time.

Implement activities

Here's where all your hard work pays off! Don't rely on yourself to carry out all the training initiatives your organization requires.



Get the team involved. Identify the leaders in your team that may have expertise or extensive knowledge on specific equipment and get them involved in your training sessions.

Whether you have individuals who are experts in front-end loader operation or running snowblowers, recruit these people to be leaders of your training program. Have them work with you on developing and performing the training activities and allow for individual customization if they have great ideas to add. Not only will this help you complete the training you want to get done, but it will give the leaders a sense of ownership in the company. It will also give employees another available resource for questions and answers if a trainer or operations specialist isn't available when needed.

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LET'S THINK ABOUT THIS: SUSTAINABILITY PART 1



What does it mean to be a “sustainable business?”

SUSTAINABILITY = RISK MANAGEMENT.

In the context of managing the risk of your business, sustainability is best defined within these principles of sustainability responsibilities: 1) economic 2) environmental and 3) social (reputation). These three are the foundation of any business to be truly sustainable. We'll touch on some other factors in future issues.

The Big Picture: A sensitive balance of business sustainability looks like this:



What to Balance:

- 1. Principles:** a) Economic, b) Environmental and c) Social responsibilities.
- 2. VM²C: Vision, Mission, Mantra, and Culture.**
Part 3 will focus on this.
- 3. 3 MITs: The three most important things** to focus on in any business include: a) Team, b) Clients and c) Assets.

“Let’s Think About This” answers questions received from SIMA members. If you have a question you want Phill to “think about” email Phill psexton@witadvisers.com.



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SPECIAL SECTION // EQUIPMENT

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Show before you go. A good practice when performing training is to use classroom or briefing activities to discuss and present theories of equipment operation; this can be used as a prerequisite to hands-on training. For instance, it is a good idea to explain and show photos of snow equipment controls, types of equipment and equipment thresholds prior to using the equipment; this reduces the time needed to explain everything during the hands-on sessions.

Following this, make sure you allow ample time to complete hands-on training, so that you can demonstrate proper equipment operation and give each employee enough time to perform the same operation with extra time to critique and retrain if any key points are missed.

Make time for Q&A. Finalize your training sessions with at least 10-15 minutes of Q&A time since you most certainly will have questions. Be prepared for phone calls, emails or in-person questions following your training sessions because once people have had time to reflect on their activities and performance, you want to be open and available to employees seeking additional guidance.

Reflection and feedback

After conducting your training sessions for the snow season, it's important to track your results and progress toward reaching your goals to determine if your activities are aligning with your purpose.

Review feedback on your training program and take time to reflect on the successes and improvements you would like to make. Properly training individuals on equipment is a continuously developing and changing process as technology, regulations and client needs evolve. You will need to consider these changes when you begin developing your annual training activities to keep your employees current and competent.

Devoting the time to your training program will pay off, and the benefits can be evaluated against your purpose:

Reduce damages and downtime. Equipment damage costs will decline as your operators gain improved understanding of how to safely and properly use equipment. When you reduce equipment downtime, it allows for a greater productivity rate in your operations. Equipment will also be used more effectively, again increasing productivity.

Empower your team. Another outcome of training your employees on specific equipment is that they will have the knowledge to make informed decisions. For instance, if an employee understands how to best operate equipment to remove snow or ice, and when and how to spread materials, they have the knowledge and skills to make self-directed decisions during a storm.

To meet any of these goals or objectives you must train employees on the specific equipment they'll be using. The objective is to train employees to eventually become experts on the equipment they operate. **SB**

Michael Wagner, CSP, is fleet and safety manager at Designscapes Colorado Inc. Contact him at 303-328-5554 or mwagner@designscapes.org.