



Training, Inc. – Success in the City

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Abstract: *Training, Inc.’s mission is to equip people to become self-sufficient by providing them with marketable computer, business, and life management skills training. Since 1981, Training, Inc. Indianapolis has worked with more than 5,000 people to help them gain the skills necessary to get and keep good jobs. Graduates typically gain entry-level employment in administrative, customer service, or sales positions. While there are other job training programs which conduct computer skills training, Training, Inc. has three essential practices that set it apart from other programs: 1. Culture of Work, 2. Learning Organization, and 3. Collaborative Partnerships.*

Imagine a time when you felt really happy, safe, secure—ready to take on the world. Now, imagine something terrible happens that is completely out of your control. You can no longer count on anything working out the way you thought it would. Imagine what it would take for you to regain your footing and feel whole and confident enough to take on the world once again.

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On a Mission to Provide Tools for Self-Sufficiency

Training, Inc., Indianapolis, is a non-profit agency offering job and life skills training programs with a mission to help people who are unemployed, or under-employed, gain marketable computer, business and life management skills needed to help them get, and keep, good jobs and eventual long-term self-sufficiency. There are hundreds of success stories of people who have benefited greatly from the Training, Inc. program. For example, one real-life story illustrates the positive life-changing results of participation:

In July, 2001, Julia was young and hopeful as she completed her college degree, a BA in Business Administration/Marketing. She had a job offer lined-up with a new federal agency set to open early in 2002; she would start soon after graduation. However, with the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Julia's job offer was rescinded because the government agency she was going to work for was not opened in light of refocused government priorities. In the economic chaos of the months and years after 9/11, Julia found herself unable to find a regular full-time job. As the stretches of unemployment lengthened, Julia began to feel defeated and finished. She eventually succumbed to depression and an overriding feeling of worthlessness and despair.

Jump ahead to August, 2011, when Julia contacted Training, Inc. to enroll in the 12-week Career Track office skills training program. By then, she was living in a shelter for homeless women and had been diagnosed with depression and bi-polar disorder. At her initial orientation and assessment interview at Training, Inc., she was monotone, lethargic, and hopeless, with eyes downcast during the entire meeting.

Within the first two weeks of training, Julia's progress was remarkable. As her technical and social skills increased, her confidence and self-esteem returned. Happily, even before completing her 3-week internship, the company where she was assigned offered her a full-time, salaried position with full benefits.

For 30 years, Training, Inc. has helped over 5,000 people. Many, like Julia, struggle with multiple challenges including mental and/or physical disabilities, chemical and/or alcohol addiction, domestic abuse, homelessness, incarceration, inadequate access to healthcare resources, a poorly-funded public transportation system, and other roadblocks faced by those dealing with lifelong poverty. The typical population of each training cycle is quite diverse:

Demographics

- Average age: 41
- 52% Female, 48% Male
- 64% African American, 28% Caucasian, 8% other races
- 20% Veterans
- 33% Previous felony/misdemeanor convictions

Despite the enormous challenges participants face in their day-to-day lives, the Training, Inc. program has resulted in exceptional success rates over the years:

5 Year Average Placement Data:

- Placement: 90%
- 90-day retention: 97%
- 180-day retention: 81%
- One year retention: 73%
- Avg. Wage at Hire: \$10

These impressive success metrics are due to the incredible tenacity and motivation of trainees, as well as to the program's holistic and realistic job skills training philosophy based on our Three Essential Practices, which lead to meaningful lifetime success for program participants:

1. Culture of Work
 - o A training environment that models the workplace.
2. Learning Organization
 - o A supportive, team-based learning structure that encourages the critical thinking and problem solving skills trainees will need on the job, and increases confidence in their abilities.
3. Collaborative Partnerships
 - o Successfully meet employer needs, build community partnerships and receive help from community volunteers who speak on various topics and interact with trainees.

A Culture of Work

There are no “teachers” or “classrooms” at Training, Inc.; it is not a “school.” The learning environment and curriculum immerse trainees in a culture of work from the first day onward and includes a time-clock system, simulated business experience, real-world project assignments, high performance expectations, supervisory relationships, and real-world internships. Training staff members are referred to as trainers and/or supervisors, and other staff members are addressed as administrators and/or managers. Trainees refer to one another as colleagues. Training rooms are set up similar to real-life office settings, where trainees are assigned to work within functional teams.

This training model reinforces all the expectations that exist in the workplace, including strict standards for attendance, professional appearance, behavior, and adherence to organizational policies. For example, candidates applying to the program must be willing to meet requirements for professional dress, follow strict attendance rules, and other typical business-style policies. Even the agency name represents this business model, as “Training, Inc.” is meant to represent a corporate entity. This has proven to be very effective in helping people become acclimated to a professional office environment, allowing them to learn the “rules of the workplace” in a safe and supportive environment. For those who have had prior office work experience, this model helps them get back into the practice and routine of the daily full-time workplace.

A Learning Organization

The Career Track office skills training curriculum focuses on helping participants not only gain specific entry- to mid-level technical and job skills, it also provides the individualized support and encouragement needed to help people build crucial self-esteem and confidence in their abilities. The basic 12-week Career Track office skills curriculum includes:

- Personality self-assessments
- Life skills (goal setting, team building, communication, professionalism, time management, accountability)
- Identifying and setting goals
- Understanding poverty dynamics

- Team building exercises
- Basic computer skills
- Typing skills
- Email and internet research
- Business math and writing skills
- Writing effective resumes and cover letters
- Job interview skills
- Business simulation exercises
- Training in Microsoft Office 2010 Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access and Outlook
- Supervised on-the-job internships
- Practical business workshops provided by volunteer professionals including human resources specialists
- Job search skills
- Job search assistance and job leads ongoing after training is complete

This curriculum helps trainees gain the necessary technical and soft skills employers in the community require. Better still are the personal benefits to individuals' self-esteem. In post-training evaluations, trainees frequently report the most important thing gained in training was a restoration of their belief in themselves and their skills. A recent Training, Inc. graduate put it this way:

I was just recently released from doing a 3-year commitment in the Indiana Department of Corrections. While I was incarcerated, I came to the conclusion that I wanted to better my life and effectively give back to the community. I was referred to Training Inc. not knowing that it would be the stepping stone that I needed to achieve all the things that I fore mentioned.

The program helped me develop business support skills that are essential in today's work force. I also learned who I am and what I have to offer as an employee. While completing my 3-week internship that is required through the program, I was fortunate enough to intern with an organization that is known for doing wonderful things in the community. My internship allowed me to network, and now I volunteer twice a week with them.

Having a [criminal] background is a hindrance and employers typically frown on ex-felons. Training, Inc. provides such a positive environment that is filled with people who want to see you succeed. Because of this, I will out-shine my felony. I have been encouraged, praised, and challenged; all for the greater good. I am confident that I will establish myself as a professional interior decorator one day because I now have the determination, skills, and confidence to make it tangible. I highly recommend Training, Inc.

Collaborative Partnerships

Core stakeholders of Training, Inc. programming are Central Indiana employers who need well-trained and productive individuals to fill jobs that make their businesses succeed. We work in partnership with many corporate, government, and non-profit organizations in Indianapolis to gain insight into the current job market and to set up beneficial internships for trainees.

Additionally, we rely on new client referrals from partnerships with local social service agencies, including community and neighborhood organizations as well as government agencies such as the Veterans Administration, Department of Corrections, IMPACT, and Vocational

Rehabilitation. An equally large number of referrals come via word-of-mouth from trainee friends and family members. It is not uncommon for us to have two and sometimes three generations from a single family attending training together.

With a paid staff of only five people, Training, Inc. relies heavily on an invaluable group of tireless volunteers. People from many professional fields, including human resources, marketing, upper-level management and successful entrepreneurships, give their time, talents, and passion by helping trainees develop business and technical skills while getting an inside view of current business practices. Just a few examples of the additional training volunteers provide are:

- **Business Panel:** Volunteers talk with trainees in a small group setting about what the business community expects. Help trainees understand issues such as attendance and punctuality, positive work attitude, professional dress and behavior, taking initiative and responsibility on the job, good human relations, communication, etc.
- **Training Assistant:** Volunteers work directly with trainees in areas such as tutoring, counseling and coaching.
- **Life Management Skills Workshops:** Volunteers make presentations to trainees on issues such as professionalism, support networks, affordable professional dress, credit and legal counseling, time and stress management, financial literacy, and more.
- **Mock Interviews:** Volunteers interview trainees and provide feedback on interview performance as trainees begin their job searches. This helps trainees refine their interviewing skills to land the perfect job.
- **Resume Review:** Volunteers assist individual trainees with editing and providing feedback to help trainees perfect their resumes.
- **Internship at Your Business:** Volunteers provide an opportunity for a trainee to experience the real world of work while getting extra help with projects—at no cost to the volunteer's company.
- **Clothes Closet/Donations:** Volunteers donate professional clothing for the Training, Inc. Clothes Closet to help trainees build a professional wardrobe that will carry the trainees through their first days and weeks on the job. Volunteers also help keep the Clothes Closet in order and sort newly donated clothing.

Return on Investment

The 12-week Training, Inc. Career Track program costs \$3,660 per trainee, including materials; participants are never charged fees for training. We rely primarily on private donations to fund programs and use these scholarship dollars to enroll up to 15 people per 12-week training cycle. Other sources of funding include the United Way, foundation grants and fees-for-service from the Veterans Administration, and State of Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation Department (for trainees referred via those agencies).

Training Inc. provides lifelong empowerment and a path to success for those who have spent much of their lives struggling daily for basic necessities. Our proven training curriculum and philosophical model gives people the tools needed to get, and keep, good jobs with long-term retention and livable hourly wage rates, so they can become successful, contributing members of the community. For every dollar spent on training, \$2.96 is returned to the community in taxes paid, dollars returned to the local economy, and savings to the state on welfare and food stamps costs. Best of all, Training, Inc. graduates re-gain a sense of self-worth and confidence to help take on the world once again!