

The human resources in a forestry company are a valuable asset that need to be kept and further developed. If skills of personnel are not further developed, there is a great risk that opportunities for improvements are missed, and this increases the risk of losing staff.

Training is one of the main tools to increase capacity within the company. Training often relates to a habit change, and too often workers continue their work after the training as if they did not attend a training. It should be understood that a habit change cannot be realized during a one week training. Ensure follow-up to a training, either internally or externally, which basically should be focussed on the question: "How can I put in practice what I've learnt in the training? This is a necessity to get the desired habit change. Preferably a training consists of two parts: an initial training and a refreshment course a couple of weeks or months later. During the initial training, the workers

should be given clear assignments / instructions how to implement the lessons learnt during the training. In between, the employees should be working on the implementation of the lessons learnt during the training. Let the trainer come back (preferably within 3 months) to see how employees implement what they have learnt, and let him adjust and correct them.



Training resulted in reduced harvesting costs

A company based in the Congo Basin introduced many changes in its operation to improve the quality and efficiency. Better planning of forest harvesting and especially better training of forest workers increased their efficiency in such a way, that this company can harvest the same amount of timber with 40% less workers, which had a considerable positive effect on forest harvesting costs.

Continuous training to ensure capacity level

Another company, operating in the Amazon region, successfully attracted qualified staff. However, with a limited local offer of quality professionals and a high turnover of staff, the biggest challenge has been to maintain this quality. One of the ways to cope with this issue is the focus on continuous training of new employees. This does result in a relatively high budget for training, but ensures continuous sufficient capacity levels.

Recommendations

- Employees that have excellent skills for specific tasks, should be placed in a position where they can (and have to!) transfer their knowledge to others, to ensure that this capacity does not remain with one or a few people.
- Introduce continuous improvement as a company's mentality. As for all businesses, it pays off to train and educate staff to develop an attitude always being on the look-out for improvement. Do not keep the improvement attitude at management level, but include employees on the ground to seek for improvement.
- Select proper training and education, well suited to the level and field of work of the employees to be trained. Carefully select which workers need which training. Just sending some workers to a training might be a waste of time and money, if it is not (sufficiently) connected to the work field and/or skills of the worker.
- Use an incentive programme, to make sure that the effects of training last incentives for quality and respect of trained techniques. Someone that knows the content of the training and that can judge the quality of the work can pass through all relevant operations and make notes on all operators. On the basis of the notes bonuses can be awarded. These should come instead of bonuses that are just awarded based on volume produced, because it is not known how much volume was lost and wasted to get to that volume.
- Keep the staff: do not cut budgets on your qualified staff. Regularly losing the best staff has a significant impact on the company's results, and might be more costly than paying them more salary.



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