



MANAGEMENT > BEST PRACTICES

Three Legs of the Plumbing Training Triangle

There are three aspects to training, which are the three legs of the Plumbing Training Triangle.

Matt Michel | Aug 23, 2019

Training for many plumbing contractors is limited to the technical skills. That is insufficient in this day and age. There are three aspects to training, which are the three legs of the Plumbing Training Triangle.

Leg #1: Technical Skills Training

Plumbing contractors tend to offer training on technical skills. This includes training on how to turn a wrench and also training on how to turn in paperwork. Technical skills training is all about the mechanical aspects of the job, whether repair related or internal process related.

Technical training is absolutely necessary. When a manufacturer makes a change to a water heater that affects its installation, every plumber in the company should be brought up to speed. This is obvious.

Less obvious is the need to train on internal company processes. Everyone should make vacation requests the same way. Everyone should complete invoices the same way. Everyone should know how to use every company form necessary for his or her job.

Another aspect of technical training that may get overlooked is safety training. This needs to be performed to stay compliant with OSHA, worker's comp, and other insurance.

Leg #2: Soft Skills Training

It is common today for plumbing contractors to supplement technical skills training with soft skills training. This is training on interpersonal communication. It is how to handle an upset customer, how to recommend optional repair and/or upgrades, dealing with price objections, and so on.

Plumbing contractors add soft skills training when they recognize that on any repair, there is broken plumbing and a broken customer. Because plumbers are mechanically adept, they can underestimate the fear customers experience over a plumbing problem. Soft skills training addresses this, resulting in complete repairs where the problem is fixed and the customer is left in a better place.

Plumbers with good soft skills have higher per call averages. They generate more revenue and gross profit for the company. Assuming they have adequate mechanical skills, they receive fewer complaints, fewer call backs, and better online reviews.

Leg #3: Life Skills Training

Today, a growing number of plumbing contractors are recognizing the need to offer life skills training. Most plumbers, for example, are paid pretty well. Yet, many still seem to live paycheck to paycheck. Why? The answer is they do not understand personal financial management. No one has taught them.

Life skills training focuses on basic life skills that everyone should learn growing up from parents and/or school. This can include how to set goals, how to balance a checking account, basic financial management, how to be a good marriage partner, how to parent, and so on.

While life skills training might turn off some of the rough tough, bristly, know-it-all, too-cool-for-everything plumbers, it will appeal to many more. People who have never learned this information are hungry for it. They will soak it up. They will buy into the company offering it. They will become better plumbers and team members as a result.

When plumbers understand how to manage their finances, they are less likely to leave for an extra dollar an hour. When they work for a company that teaches good character, it can change their lives in ways that makes them never want to change employers.

Companies offering life skills training stand out. Word gets around. People hear that there is something different about this company. People begin seeking employment with the company. The company recruits less and selects more.

Completing the Triangle

A plumbing contractor cannot focus on one leg of the triangle to the exclusion of the others. Work on all three. Technical skills training is the easiest to source. The owner, service manager, or a lead plumber can handle a technical issue at each service meeting. A company can address current technical challenges, troubleshooting and repair tips, and also share technical columns from *CONTRACTOR Magazine*. In addition, local trade schools, local trade associations, and wholesalers often provide classes.

Soft skills training is another that can be led in-house as part of a service meeting. Literally thousands of books address soft skills and interpersonal communication, providing ample material. Contractors can utilize third party products like Charlie Greer's Tec Daddy DVD series. And, as already mentioned, *CONTRACTOR Magazine* is filled with resources.

Life skills might be included in service meetings or it might be offered separately on an optional basis. Consider holding soft skills training over lunch. Anyone who wants to attend, can attend. Some of the training resources available include Dave Ramsey's Financial Wellness, Character First, and so on. A quick search online for pre-packaged corporate training programs or life skills training will yield a number of choices.

For additional training and business resources, visit the Service Roundtable at www.ServiceRoundtable.com or call 877/262-3341.

Source URL: <https://www.contractormag.com/best-practices/three-legs-plumbing-training-triangle>