



Employees seek leadership development opportunities to move up within the ranks

by Lori McGinnis Black

Many employees today look to hone their leadership skills through training and development programs available through their employer, outside firms or institutions of higher learning.

C&A Industries, for example, has training programs for employees who want to rise through the ranks and supervisors who want to take their leadership skills to the next level, said



Hall

Liz Hall, executive director of training and development.

IStaff Training is a locally-owned and operated technical training facility that offers a wide range of leadership training and development courses, said Lori Vanderheiden, owner.

More women are striving to build their professional value in an organization, said Pamela Imperato, Ph.D., and assistant dean of the College of Business at Bellevue University.

At C&A, Hall's responsibility is to oversee training and development opportunities for the company's 400 employees. This includes training for newly hired employees and leadership and professional development opportunities for other workers.

C&A offers professional development for employees who have been with the company for six months or longer, Hall said. Two, 12-week programs are available for employees to develop their leadership skills.

This training, held in one 90-minute session a week, helps employees develop their communication skills, learn better how to deal with conflict and improve their "soft skills," Hall said.

"It helps give them some sense of empowerment in the organization," she said.

The program also gives employees exposure to executive management personnel in the company that they otherwise would not meet, she said.

Another program offered at C&A is

geared toward those already in leadership positions. It aims to help them improve their abilities to coach others.

IStaff has educated students in numerous industries, including health care, financial, government and communications, Vanderheiden said.

The company offers leadership and development courses in career development, communication, customer relations, finance, management skills, presentations, project management and sales.

Management skills cover everything from business etiquette and ethics to time management and organizational skills.

Founded in 1996, the company provides software, information technology, computer and business training to students all over the world, she said.

"These programs are mostly for people looking to acquire new skills, make a career change or move up in a particular business," Vanderheiden said. "They are also for people looking to refine their current skills and become a better employee."

Vanderheiden encourages women to take such programs to keep their skills up to date to stay as competitive as possible in the workplace.

The male to female enrollment balance in higher education is now weighted more strongly to female students, which Dr. Imperato said indicates that women clearly see the advantages of higher education in shaping and moving them



Vanderheiden

forward in their careers.

"Women are striving to build their professional value in an organization," she said. "Finding that opportunity to strate-

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gically look at and plan one's long-term professional horizon as a woman is often difficult for there is much on the horizon and many contingent unknowns."

Self-assessment is critical when mapping out a career development strategy that involves continuing education, she said. Bellevue University has curriculum in which students can assess their professional strengths, opportunities for professional development and how they can develop within their organizations, she said.

Specific courses taken early in a student's program can help them build self-awareness and become more cognizant of how they can enhance their strengths or address their limitations, she said.



Pamela Imperato, Ph.D., and assistant dean of the College of Business at Bellevue University.