FEATURE

Training as a Strategic Investment in People and Performance

by Stephane McShane, Maxim Consulting Group

Effective training is more than a checklist item or a compliance requirement. It is one of the strongest tools an organization has for improving performance, retaining talent, reducing confusion, and preparing employees for long-term success. When training is designed intentionally, measured consistently, and communicated clearly, it becomes a system for building confidence at every level of the company. Employees gain the knowledge and skills they need to do their jobs well, while employers gain a more capable, flexible, and engaged workforce.

Why is training so important?

Benefits for the employee

For employees, training provides clarity, confidence, and opportunity. A person who understands the expectations of a role is more likely to make good decisions, solve problems independently, and take ownership of results. Training also reduces the anxiety that comes from uncertainty. Instead of guessing how a process works or relying on inconsistent verbal instructions, employees can refer to established standards and repeatable workflows. This creates a stronger foundation for job satisfaction and professional growth.

Training also signals that the company values the employee's future. When people see that their employer is willing to invest time, resources, and coaching into their development, they are more likely to view their role as part of a career path rather than just a job. This is especially important in organizations that want to retain strong performers and develop internal leaders. Skill-building gives employees a practical way to increase their value, qualify for more responsibility, and move toward promotions or raises based on objective achievement.

Benefits for the employer

For employers, training improves consistency and reduces risk. When employees are taught the same standards, procedures, and expectations, the organization becomes less dependent on tribal knowledge and individual interpretation. This leads to fewer mistakes, faster onboarding, better customer experience, and smoother coordination b etween departments. A strong training program also makes it easier to identify gaps before they become costly problems.

Training is also a workforce planning tool. Employers that understand the skills available within their teams can make better decisions about staffing, succession planning, project assignments, and hiring needs. Instead of reacting to shortages after they appear, leaders can

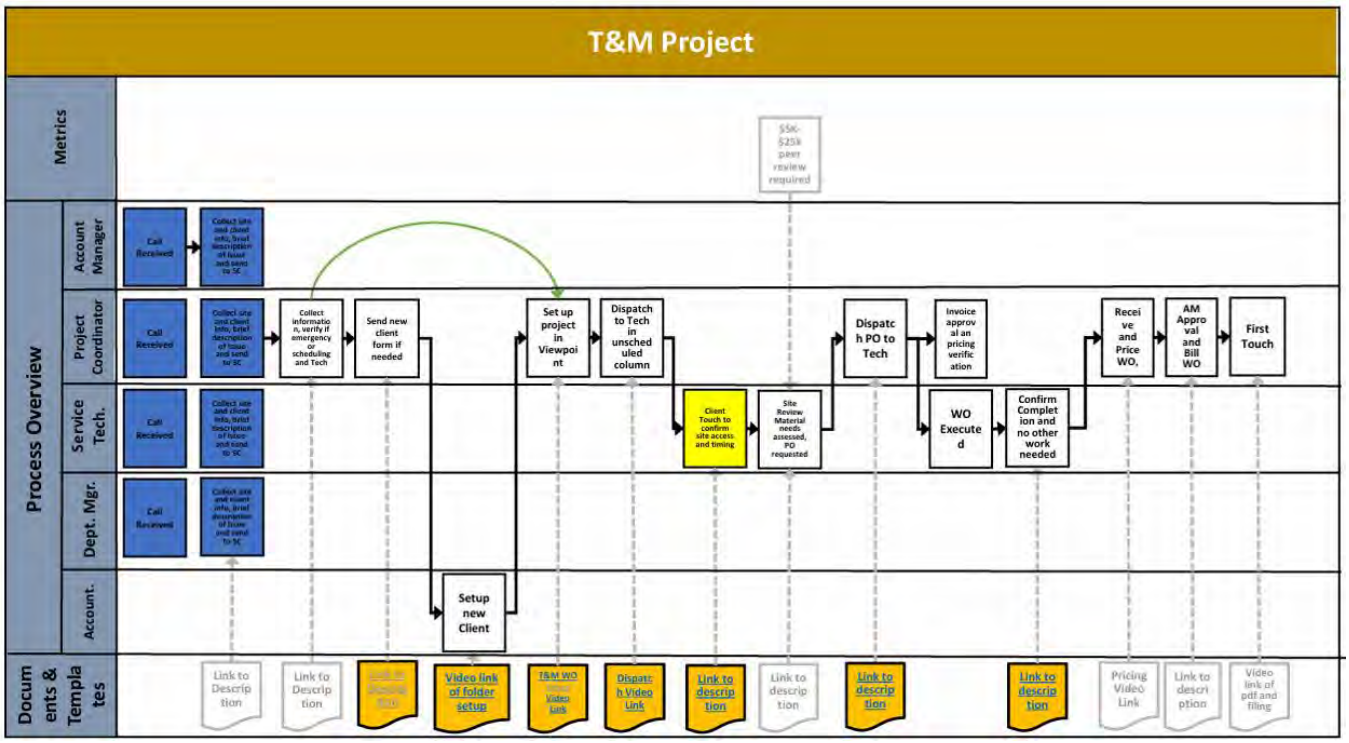


Figure 1

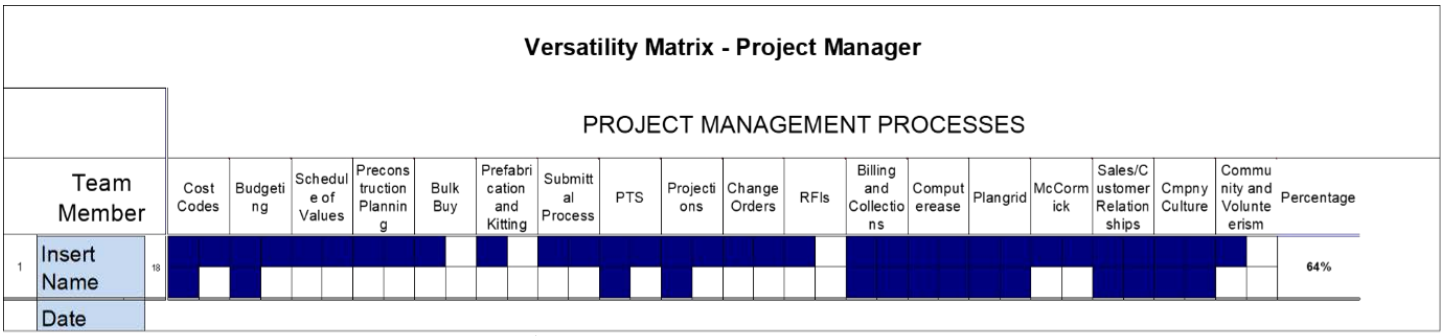
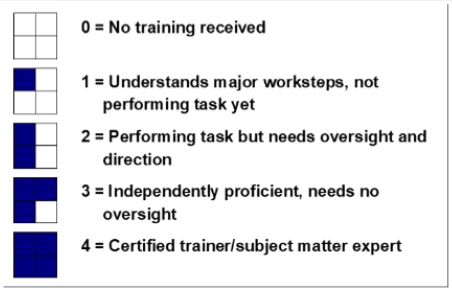


Figure 2



proactively prepare employees for future responsibilities. This creates a more resilient organization and strengthens operational continuity.

Multiple training methods produce the greatest impact

The most effective training programs rarely rely on only one method. Classroom instruction, written procedures, on-the-job coaching, peer mentoring, cross-training, simulations, and digital learning each serve a purpose. Some employees learn best by reading the process, while others need to see it performed and then practice it themselves. A blended approach gives employees multiple ways to absorb and apply information, which increases retention and real-world performance.

Workflows that cross operational silos establish staff interaction and minimize confusion

Cross-functional workflows are especially valuable because many operational problems occur at the handoff between departments. When teams understand not only their own tasks but also how their work affects the next person in the process, communication improves and confusion decreases. Training that crosses operational silos helps employees see the bigger picture. A project coordinator, estimator, operations manager, and accounting team member may each have different responsibilities, but their work is connected. Teaching the workflow as an integrated system helps prevent delays, duplicated effort, and frustration. An example is shown in Figure 1.

Use of subject matter experts leverage the knowledge of your experienced staff

Subject matter experts are one of the most powerful resources in any training program. Experienced employees often possess practical knowledge that is not captured in manuals or formal procedures. By involving them as trainers, mentors, reviewers, or process owners, an organization can transfer institutional knowledge before it is lost. This also recognizes the value of experienced staff and gives them a meaningful role in shaping the next generation of talent. However, subject matter experts should be supported with structure so their knowledge is delivered consistently and aligned with company standards.

Topic	Current Competency Rating	Competency Level Needed	When Needed	Class Offered	Resources	Subject Matter Expert (SME)	Notes
Cost Codes, "The Why"							
Definitions and Unit of Measure							
Cost Types							
Work Breakdown Structure, "The Why"							
Labor and Quantity Breakdowns							
Budgeting Workbook							
SOV Definition, "The Why"							
SOV Template							
Front Loading							
Building a Lump Sum SOV							
Building a GMP SOV							

Figure 3

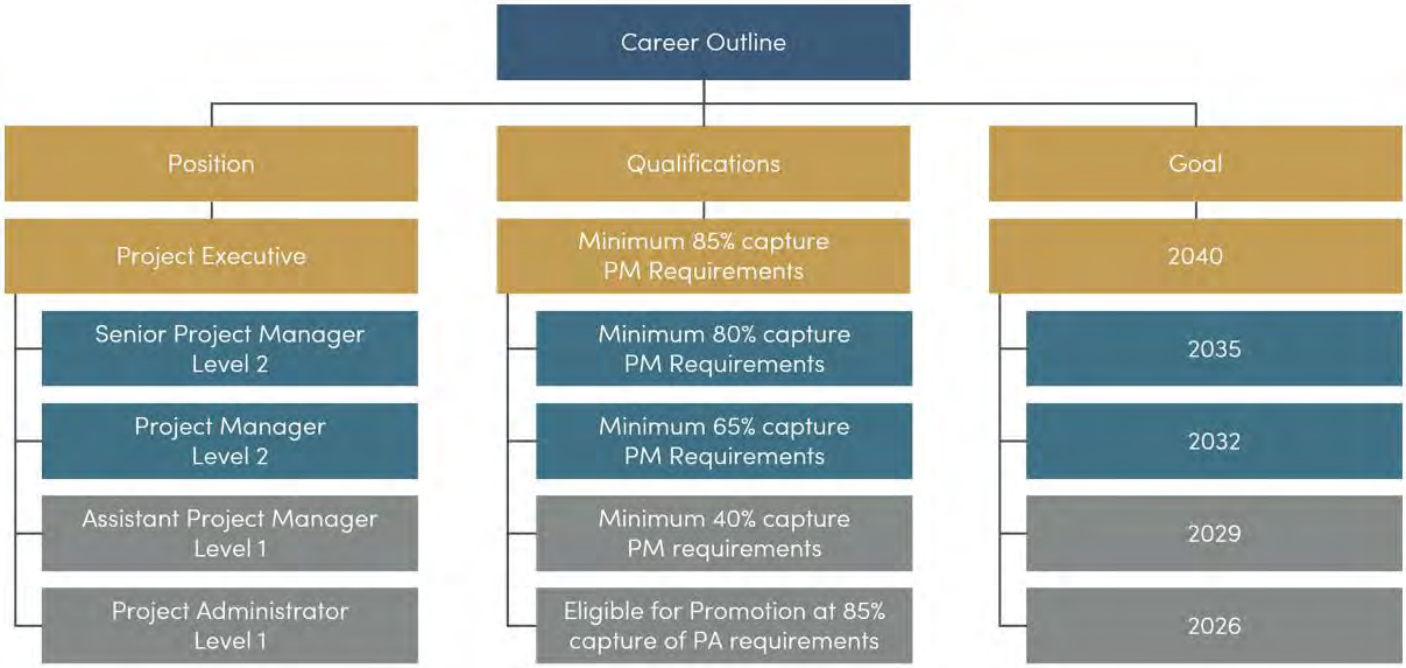


Figure 4

Measuring for results

Training must be measured to determine whether it produces results. Attendance alone does not prove that learning has occurred, and completion certificates do not always demonstrate job readiness. Organizations need practical methods for evaluating current skill levels, tracking progress, and connecting development efforts to business outcomes. Measurement turns training from an activity into a performance system.

Evaluation of current skill utilizing a matrix

A skillset matrix is a useful starting point because it creates a visible snapshot of what employees can currently do, what they are learning, and where gaps exist. The matrix can list key skills by role and rate each employee's proficiency using clear criteria. This allows leaders to identify strengths, prioritize training needs, and match people to work that fits their capabilities. It also helps employees understand where they stand and what they need to improve (see Figure 2).

Creation of development plan with priorities on the highest ROI skills

Once skill gaps are identified, the organization can create development plans that focus on the highest-return skills first. Not every skill has the same urgency or business impact. Some skills directly affect safety, revenue, customer satisfaction, schedule performance, or quality control. Prioritizing these areas ensures that training time is used wisely. A strong development plan should include the target skill, current proficiency, desired proficiency, training method, responsible coach or mentor, timeline, and method of evaluation (see Figure 3).

Stratification of Positions into Levels

Position stratification connects training to advancement. By defining levels within a role, organizations can show employees exactly what is required to move forward. Instead of promotions being viewed as subjective or political, advancement can be tied to predetermined key performance indicators, demonstrated competencies, and skill evaluation scores. This creates fairness, transparency, and motivation. Employees know what they are working toward, and managers have a consistent framework for coaching and evaluating progress.

For example, a project management career ladder might include Assistant Project Manager, Project Manager I, Project Manager II, Senior Project Manager, and Project Executive. Even smaller companies can adopt this as it allows achievement based on tangible goals. Each level should have defined expectations for technical knowledge, financial responsibility, client communication, schedule management, leadership, and problem-solving. A Project Manager I may focus on learning standard processes and supporting smaller projects, while a Senior Project Manager may be expected to manage complex work, mentor others, and consistently deliver financial and operational results. Their progression becomes clear, measurable, and achievable (see Figure 4).

Constant Communication Quells Employee Insecurities

Even the best training program can create anxiety if it is not communicated well. Employees may worry that skill evaluations are being used to criticize them, replace them, or expose weaknesses. Leaders must explain that the purpose of training and measurement is development, not punishment. Clear communication helps employees understand the goals of the program, how the information will be used, and how it benefits both the individual and the organization.

When training is presented as an investment in the employee's future, engagement increases. People are more willing to participate when they understand

that development can lead to greater confidence, broader opportunity, and increased earning potential. Managers should reinforce this message in team meetings, one-on-one conversations, and performance discussions. The tone should be supportive, practical, and forward-looking.

Consistent follow-up is essential. Development plans should not be created and then forgotten. Regular check-ins allow managers and employees to review progress, remove obstacles, adjust priorities, and celebrate improvement. Follow-up also creates accountability. If a skill is important enough to measure, it is important enough to revisit. This rhythm keeps development active and demonstrates that leadership is committed to the process.

Employees must also play the primary role in driving their own career paths. A company can provide tools, coaching, training, and opportunities, but the employee must bring effort, curiosity, ownership, and follow-through. The best development systems make this partnership clear. Employees can influence where they progress and how quickly they achieve by actively seeking feedback, completing training, applying new skills, and demonstrating readiness for the next level.

Summary

In the end, training is not simply about teaching tasks. It is about building a culture where people understand expectations, departments work together more effectively, leaders make decisions based on skill data, and employees see a future for themselves inside the organization. When training methods are varied, results are measured, career paths are transparent, and communication is constant, the organization gains more than improved performance. It gains trust, engagement, and a stronger foundation for sustainable growth.

About the Author

Stephane McShane is a Director at ***Maxim Consulting Group*** responsible for the evaluation and implementation processes with our clients. Stephane works with construction related firms of all sizes to evaluate business practices and assist with management challenges. With a large depth of experience working in the construction industry, Stephane is keenly aware of the business and, most specifically, operational challenges that firms face. Her areas of expertise include: Leadership development, executive coaching, organizational assessments, strategic planning, project execution, business development, productivity improvement, and training programs. Mrs. McShane is an internationally recognized speaker, mentor, author, and teacher. Her ability to motivate, inspire, and create confidence among your work groups is extremely rare and very effective.

UPCOMING WEBINAR

SALT Overview and Risk for Subcontractors

Tuesday, August 11, 2026
(12:00 PM - 1:00 PM) (EDT)

This session will provide an overview of state and local tax (SALT) issues that are particularly relevant to subcontractors, including an overview of relevant taxes. The presentation will address practical compliance strategies and highlight common audit issues. After this session, you will be able to:

- Identify key taxes that apply to subcontractors in different states and localities
- Recognize compliance risks and common audit triggers specific to subcontracting activities
- Apply best practices for documentation and exemption certificate management
- Understand recent tax trends relevant to subcontractors
- Implement strategies to minimize exposure and ensure ongoing compliance with evolving SALT requirements

This course is designed for subcontractors, construction and service industry professionals, project managers, controllers, accountants, and anyone responsible for tax compliance or risk management in organizations that perform work across state and local jurisdictions.

About the Presenters:

Thomas Miller, MBA, JD, LL.M., REDW LLC

Tom Miller leads REDW LLC's State & Local Tax (SALT) group, applying over 15 years of specialized experience to help businesses navigate the complex landscape of multistate taxation. From compliance to strategic consulting, he supports clients operating in all 50 states by identifying tax-saving opportunities and minimizing risk. Recognized for his diligence and knowledge of tax law, Tom has taken on leadership roles within the SALT practices of both global accounting firms and private industry. His broad exposure to indirect tax functions and multistate compliance issues gives him a well-rounded perspective and practical insight into the unique challenges businesses face across jurisdictions.

Thomas Boyle, JD, LL.M, REDW LLC

Tom Boyle brings over six years of experience in State & Local Tax, assisting businesses with complex multistate tax issues. He advises businesses on nexus studies, voluntary disclosure agreements, audit defense, reverse audits, and taxability analyses, helping them reduce risk and uncover savings opportunities. Tom's expertise spans both income and indirect taxes, including sales and use tax. As an attorney, Tom combines legal insight with practical tax strategies to guide businesses through compliance and planning challenges across multiple jurisdictions.

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