

A Solution to Modernizing Apprenticeships

GOVERNMENTS AND AGENCIES often define and validate apprenticeship programs by how they carry out training. This is a significant fallacy within our national apprenticeship system. Apprenticeship in its basic form is earning while learning. Organizations benefit by gaining employees' on-the-job production while they are learning and upskilling. Employees benefit by earning a fair wage while learning and upskilling. The overarching truth is that how we carry out training does not define an apprenticeship and it is not the same from one organization to the next. When we recognize the true definition of apprenticeship we will understand the actual number of apprenticeships and apprentices in our country. Modern apprenticeships are the future of U.S. training systems but recognition of most will be suppressed to bolster traditional systems.

When U.S. governments and agencies think about apprenticeships, they associate the quality of a program with the amount of time it takes to transfer skills and wage progression throughout training. This leads us to believe that:

- If training does not include thousands of job hours, it's not a quality apprenticeship.
- If training does not include hundreds of hours of related theory, it's not a quality apprenticeship.
- If employees are not increasing their wages while training, it's not a quality apprenticeship.

The common fallacy of these principles is that they are not timeless constants; rather, holding true to them is the biggest barrier to a modernized apprenticeship, one aligned to how an organization operates. The quality of the program is measured by how closely the training system is aligned to the organization's operational and production goals. Holding onto traditional principles that impede this alignment, rather than committing to quality training, will not produce a

quality apprenticeship that provides an ROI for the organization or the apprentice.

The good news is there is a solution: the NIMS Smart Training Solutions framework to modernize apprenticeships. Working with many U.S. employers, NIMS has identified seven Smart Training Principles associated with high performing training programs. These principles are further broken down into 56 training behaviors used to carry out on-the-job (OJT) training. While universal, these principles and behaviors are not designed to be one-size-fits-all. Organizations can adopt behaviors that meet their needs in order to create customized training programs and produce a positive ROI. Employer Engagement steps are:

Step 1: Familiarize. Read our training guidebook, "Ultimate Guide to Enhancing your Training Program," to familiarize yourself with universal training principles and behaviors.

Step 2: Discover. Take our online self-evaluation to discover your training principles. Your results will help you to discover gaps between your company's current and desired training. Outcome: Better understand your OJT system.

Step 3: Analyze. Participate in a one-day consultation session to evaluate the results of your self-evaluation and training behaviors and determine if enhancements are needed. Outcome: Receive a customized training playbook.

Step 4: Enhance. NIMS will support the development and implementation of plays within your playbook. Outcome: Enhanced training program.

Step 5: Recognize. NIMS will work with your organization to develop a plan to formally recognize all stakeholders. Outcome: Organization and its members are credentialed for achieving desired workforce performance.

Let's all work together to make apprenticeships as effective as they can be. Visit www.nims-skills.org to learn more. ➔



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