

The background is a close-up photograph of a green leaf with several clear water droplets. A large, semi-transparent orange circle is positioned in the center-right of the frame. The text is contained within this circle. There are also some thin, curved lines in orange and teal that sweep across the page.

## Be Prepared

Why you should invest in training even when times are tight

sage



It's practical for any business to keep a careful eye on its costs and particularly important during tough economic times. When business is quiet, training is traditionally one of the first areas to take a cut, but that may actually be a short-sighted move. Let's take a look at why it makes sense to invest in the right training for your staff; how to make sure it offers good value and how training can be the basis for long-term business success.

### **It's all about budgets**

When times are tight, cutting training budgets may seem like an easy option to reduce costs. But let's consider the flip side for a moment. Think about when times are good. When business is busy, how difficult is it to schedule training with your employees working at full stretch?

Now, thinking positively, as the economy begins to pick up again, which businesses are better placed to take advantage of the upturn? Those with a highly skilled and motivated workforce, or those just getting by with minimal resources?


## It's about your business future

Now is a good time to take an objective view of the skills and resources you already have within your organisation. What qualifications, talents and objectives do your staff have? Are there areas that could be developed to add more flexibility to your business?

Start by making the most of your existing resources. If you already have experienced people, can they pass on their skills through training, or provide work shadowing for less experienced staff? Everyone who takes part in some kind of training event has potentially got something to bring back to help others in your business.

And get smart about training. If you have several people to train, it's often more cost effective to ask a trainer to visit your business, rather than adding multiple travel expenses. Don't forget, training doesn't have to mean classroom courses. Consider self-study, online and other options too.

Remember, it's not just your business that may be feeling the pinch. Training providers may be feeling it too, so it's a good time to negotiate discounts or take advantage of reduced price training.



**Do you have the skills and resources you need for your business now? How about in five years time?**

## It's about your people

Staff who feel valued by your organisation are motivated and likely to perform better, in turn adding value to your business. Providing useful, focused training and development is key to that motivation.

If you show faith in and help to develop your employees, even in tough times, you're more likely to be able to retain those skills when things pick up again.

And while businesses feeling the pinch may be looking at reducing staff numbers or working hours, there's the converse argument that recruiting during a recession can make sense. It can be an opportunity to attract good, well-skilled people who have been forced to look elsewhere due to restructuring.

## It's about leadership

Do you have the skills and resources you need for your business now? How about in five years time? Are there key people who you couldn't do without?

Do you have roles it would be tricky or expensive to fill in future? You may have skills gaps now, but could you use this time to fill them and develop the skills you'll need to support and advance your business both in the short and long term?

It's easy to lose track of the bigger picture when business is busy. So now could be the right time to consider your future, particularly if the economic downturn is prompting you to expand your options or take a new direction.

Investing in career progression is not only a motivating and productive force for your staff, it can help your managers ensure that they're well equipped with the right structure, skills and people to move forward as business improves again.

## Return on investment

For any HR team, the trickiest aspect of managing training can be justifying the cost. Of course, for some industries, training, especially in health and safety procedures is essential. But any kind of employee development can add value to your business, providing you chose wisely and align it with your business objectives.

It's important to assess each training activity and its value to the business. Once you understand the skills you already have within your business, you can identify those you need to progress.

It's also important that training helps you meet your business objectives. Courses and training events may be popular with your employees, but being able to demonstrate how they add value to your company is a better way of securing your budget.


This could range from simply being able to see how many people have attended a particular training event, to evaluating its value and effectiveness. Having that kind of information at hand helps you keep track of your actual training spend and balance it against your budget plans.

## Reduce the admin burden

Getting smart with your training means getting the best value from your budget. After all it makes no sense to book training for 20 people only to discover only three can make it because the rest are on holiday. Set targets for the minimum and maximum number of delegates to ensure you get a good return on your training investment.

Training can place many day-to-day demands on your HR team, but it's possible to find ways of working more efficiently. Even simple things like using a set of templates for standard communications such as joining instructions and course details can help reduce the amount of work that's duplicated.

By reducing the amount of repetitive administration tasks, your HR professionals gain more time to add their value and expertise where it's most effective. This is particularly important if you have to deal with redundancies or changes to working conditions.



**It's important to assess each training activity and its value to the business. Once you understand the skills you already have within your business, you can identify those you need to progress.**

## You don't have to do it all yourself

If all that sounds like an awful lot of additional work for a hard-pressed HR team, it doesn't have to be. Training management software can help you manage some or all of these tasks quickly and easily. From simply organising and booking relevant training, to succession and leadership planning, there are tools and reports to help you organise, evaluate and budget for all your training needs.

## Training makes good business sense

Even when times are tough, it's important not to underestimate the value that the right training can add to the future success of your business.

It helps your employees feel motivated and valued, and helps you maintain and add new skills to your business mix. With the right people with the right skills and right attitude in place, your business is well set to take advantage of future opportunities for success.



**Sage (UK) Limited**

4 Witan Way  
Witney  
Oxon  
OX28 6FF

Telephone	01993 862 181
Facsimile	01993 709 300
Website	<a href="http://www.snowdropkcs.co.uk">www.snowdropkcs.co.uk</a>
Email	<a href="mailto:snowdropkcs@sage.com">snowdropkcs@sage.com</a>

Registered in England No. 1045967 and with its  
registered office at North Park, Newcastle upon Tyne NE13 9AA