

5 KEYS TO TRAINING SUCCESS

For Door, Frame, and Hardware Distributors



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Introduction

With the labor shortage in full swing in the construction industry, door distributors are searching for solutions. Software for Hardware has discussed the best practices for attracting and retaining staff in our [5 Keys to Hiring Success](#) whitepaper. We know how using strategies tailored to younger generations can help hire promising new employees. But what happens after hiring those new employees? How can you train your hires, many of whom are brand-new to the industry, to become the next generation of skilled, experienced professionals?

5 Keys to Training Success offers methods, strategies, and mindsets to effectively train new employees in the door, frame, and hardware industry. Through research, interviews, and survey data, this paper offers a snapshot of door distributors' current challenges and strategies for training. It then discusses five keys for training success: **identify needs, provide resources, communicate effectively, use technology, and think long-term**. By keeping these steps in mind, door distributors can work harmoniously with their employees to pave a promising future for the new generation.





Current Situation

Labor shortages have plagued the construction industry for years, but two trends combined during the COVID-19 pandemic to make hiring even harder: more workers retiring and more workers quitting.

Government assistance programs accelerated the trend of older workers retiring. Others quit their jobs to look for more flexibility, better management and a healthier work-life balance amidst the pandemic's challenges.

As a result, the workforce landscape is changing. Many door distributors are now hiring inexperienced employees with little industry knowledge, as is the case with door distributor Rapid Door & Trim.

"The problem is less about employee retention and more about finding people in the first place," says Lyndi Marth, Rapid Door's Human Resources Manager. "We're having to hire people who are pretty fresh to the industry."

Software for Hardware conducted a survey with six door distributors to assess training trends and found similar results about industry experience. In response to the question "How would you describe the industry experience of most employees you hired since January 2023?," four out of six responded, "had no industry experience." One respondent said,

"one to two years of experience" and the other said "three to four years of experience."

Professionals in the door safety and security industry investigate this trend in "Is There a Generation Gap in the Security Industry?," an episode of HID Global's All Access Podcast. Katie Greatti, Benji Bolick and Dani Bazan discuss that historically, the industry has been a lot about who you know, and now it is moving towards hiring individuals with random job histories who must adapt to the security industry. As a result, we are seeing a greater diversity of individuals, ideas and skills in the workforce.

Because many individuals do not have much industry knowledge, the skills gap can be difficult. It takes a lot of time and resources to teach the information required for project manager and estimator roles. Moreover, if an employee makes a mistake while learning the ropes in this industry, it can cost a lot.

But these individuals also present a big opportunity for growth in the industry: they bring new knowledge and fresh perspectives. With the older generation retiring, we can embrace the wave of young people entering doors, frames, and hardware by implementing training programs tailored specifically to them.



Training Across Generations

Embracing newcomers means connecting across generations. Millennials generally range from 25-40 years old and are the ones entering the workforce at a rapid rate as older generations retire. Though not all millennials are the same, we can pinpoint prevalent trends about the generation. Namely, millennials are generally more technologically savvy because they “were born into a technological world and came of age in a new millennium”, as Indeed puts it. They often understand and enjoy using technology, which is a valuable skill in a workforce where technology use has lagged. In this way, millennials have a lot to offer the door, frame, and hardware industry.

Tebarco Door & Metal Services is one door distributor working to train the new generation. “We try to hire young people who want to work,” says Jeff Bissell, Vice President of Tebarco. This company starts from the ground up by training inexperienced but motivated young people in the industry. Gradually, these hires work their way up and move into more complex roles.

It’s important to keep in mind that new workers aren’t alone in the need to learn skills and knowledge. Today, the pace of change in the construction industry has accelerated and “new technologies, sustainability requirements, and complex projects demand higher expertise”,

says Johnathan E. Mitchell, a seasoned construction industry analyst from HR Future. Those who have worked in doors, frames, and hardware for years may find themselves in need of continued training as new trends arrive and drive the flow of the industry.

Furthermore, Mitchell argues that addressing the skills gap “is not just about finding qualified workers; it’s about fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptation.” By approaching the training of new employees with an open mind, you will encounter greater growth. Older and younger generations have a lot to teach each other, and both sides being ready to learn in the training process will reveal the path to success. Think of the following five keys as a roadmap for traveling that path.



5 Keys to Training Success

1. Identify Needs

The first step to training employees is understanding what they do and don't need. Since businesses today are hiring employees with all levels of industry experience to combat the labor shortage, the knowledge base of new employees will range dramatically.

That's why you should start with a training needs analysis. This kind of analysis "looks at the knowledge, skills, and abilities of employees globally to determine what types of training they need to move your company towards its objectives," says eLearning Industry. It determines an employee's starting point so you can develop a plan of next points.

You can discover an employee's current knowledge through questionnaires and conversation. Ask what tools and software they are familiar with and what they know about door security and safety. Having a deep understanding of their role will help you ask the right questions to test their knowledge.

Remember to test more than just industry knowledge, too. Mitchell reminds us that comprehensive training programs "must blend technical skills, soft skills, and industry-specific knowledge." In other words, employees also need strong communication and problem-solving skills to perform their roles well, so be sure to ask questions that gauge their understanding of these

“Comprehensive training programs must blend technical skills, soft skills, and industry-specific knowledge.”

— Johnathan E. Mitchell, HR Future

skills. You can do this with a questionnaire that asks how they would handle relevant situations.

Through this, you will find your employee's starting point. Make a list of what they don't know, as these will become training priorities. But also make notes of what they do know; new employees may bring knowledge of new technologies and techniques that could be beneficial for your business.

A good training needs analysis will also discover how your employees like to learn. Different people learn in different ways, and a one-size-fits-all approach rarely works for everyone. Your employee may learn better through visuals and video, or they may learn better through text. They may thrive when learning information in short bursts, or they may enjoy long learning sessions. By understanding how they learn, you can tailor a plan that works best for them.

In fact, customized plans like these are on the rise for 2024, says Training Magazine. In a departure from traditional training methods, employee-led training emphasizes the employee's autonomy and individuality. It lets them have a say in their learning experience – letting them influence what, how, and when they learn. By having a say, employees can become more invested and motivated in their work. It also gives the employee more independence and ownership early on.

Of course, you should always guide employees to some degree as they begin their training, even if you take an employee-led approach. It's important to maintain the right balance between autonomy and supervision for your employees, and you will discover that balance the more you work with them.



2. Provide Resources

Once you know what and how your employees will learn, you need to provide them with resources. Allocating resources requires careful balancing of goals, time, and finances. With so much to teach, you need to create a plan that is sustainable both for them and for your business.

A good beginning strategy is to develop an organized library of helpful onboarding forms and resources. Keep this library updated and accessible, and you'll always have it for when new employees enter in the future, saving you valuable time.

When it comes to education, look at your budget and decide what you're willing to spend. Keep in mind that employee learning is a long-term investment for a business. If a business cuts corners

with their training at the start, it will just lead to more costly, time-consuming mistakes in the future.

One method that many door distributors have found success with is peer-to-peer training. Long-time employees have years of experience to share with newcomers, so leverage their knowledge and let them talk often with new hires. This method does take time out of your other employees' workdays, so make sure those employees aren't falling behind in their own work.

Shadowing is another great option. Shadowing allows a new hire to watch a more experienced employee at work on an average day, observing how they handle tasks without taking them away from work. They can learn procedures relevant to their own role and ask questions when they arise. Encourage the new employee to take notes for later reference.



PEER-TO-PEER



SHADOWING



DHI COURSES



ON-THE-JOB

In our 5 Keys to Training Success survey, six out of six respondents listed in-house peer training as a successful method for training new hires. One respondent discussed the importance of hands-on, real-time training: "It's expensive because it ties up the trainer who is profitable and productive, but this is not an industry you can learn from a book." Furthermore, this respondent emphasized the need for passing down knowledge: "We need peer mentors. We need retirees and experienced people to train. It's very, very costly but effective."

Many door distributors also utilize DHI education courses. DHI provides a range of in-person and online courses for new and experienced professionals in the door security and safety industry. Even if your employees work primarily hands-on, taking courses can help them learn and retain important knowledge and context. For example, while Tebarco Door & Metal Services conducts its training almost entirely in-house, it also directs employees to DHI courses when they could use extra training.

For in-person education courses, DHI offers multiple locations. Companies can also request that a DHI instructor travel to their location. Some employees may learn better with in-person teaching, as it includes hands-on work and face-to-face social interaction. They can have more personalized experiences with the instructor and get their questions answered in real time.

One other method is direct on-the-job training in the field. Your employee can gain a lot of experience quickly by jumping right into the role, but this may not work for everyone. Some workers may get overwhelmed with too much at once, which could lead to costly errors. Your training needs analysis can help you figure out the right time to introduce on-the-job work to someone.

At some point, though, every employee must make the leap from shadowing peers to working directly in the field – and they'll learn a lot when they do.



3. Communicate Effectively

You can develop the best individualized plans for your employees, but if you don't know how to communicate with them effectively, your training won't go far. Strong communication is essential to reduce errors and meet goals.

Both manager and employee must be on the same page. This is best done through honesty and transparency. Be clear not only about when something needs to be done, but why it needs to be done. As Indeed says, "Demonstrating... open communication can earn your employees' trust and make them feel like valued members of the organization." Employees will feel relied on after receiving all the information about a project or business goal and thus motivated to meet your expectations. They will also feel encouraged to be truthful on their end.

When outlining expectations, convey yourself concisely. Avoid using too many words or technical phrases at the start. The fewer emails it takes to accurately make your point, the better. If you can, consider using instant messaging as well as emails, since many millennial workers are accustomed to this speedy method of communication.

You should also check in with your employees regularly. Daily check-ins are good to start with; once the employee has been around for longer, consider switching to weekly check-ins. You should be approachable, asking how they have felt about their training and if they need help with anything. The goal is to help them meet expectations and show how you care about their input and well-being.

Indeed also suggests scheduling regular team meetings. These offer opportunities for employees to provide updates, discuss progress and challenges, brainstorm solutions, convey expectations, and answer questions. New employees will see the typical workflow of the office members and begin connecting with them. Creating an agenda for meetings can keep them concise and to-the-point.

If the employee is struggling with training tasks, be open to adjusting their training plan to better fit their needs. Offer support by asking how you could help them feel less overwhelmed. Feeling listened to, they might take the opportunity to ask questions on topics that have confused them. Lyndi Marth, Human Resources Manager at Rapid Door & Trim, advises having patience during the process. "Allow people the time to soak it in and grow," she says.

"Allow people the time to soak it in and grow."

— Lyndi Marth, Rapid Door & Trim

4. Use Technology

Another way to offer support is through technology. Since many millennials and younger generations are comfortable using technology, providing these tools can aid them greatly in their training.

Historically, the construction industry has lagged in adopting new technologies and tools. Mitchell discusses the role of technology in construction, saying that it is a double-edged sword: “On the one hand, it has created a skills gap by introducing new tools and methodologies that require specialized knowledge. On the other hand, it offers innovative solutions for training and development.”

Right now is a prime opportunity to bridge the technological skills gap. As you hire more tech-savvy people in the industry, try implementing that new productivity tool you’ve always been interested in. These workers will likely pick up on it fast, and then they can teach these tools to other members in the organization. In doing so, you can make your entire organization more technologically skilled and productive.

Project management software is helpful technology for door distributors. Instead of writing out submittals and drawing elevations by hand, you can use software to quickly input, organize, and print your data. When you are accustomed to traditional methods, it can be difficult to make the leap into project

management software; but having new young employees who learn best through technology offers a great chance to make the transition.

Moreover, Emily Newton from Training Industry says, “Today’s employees expect learning to be engaging and for it to be relevant to their job... Implementing technology during onboarding can help make this possible.” In other words, technology can help employers meet modern employees’ expectations and keep their training efficient. One specific tool is a learning management system (LMS). By providing a convenient dashboard of relevant materials for employees to access at any time, an LMS streamlines and personalizes the training process.

Microlearning is one feature that many LMSs offer. This is when training content is provided in 5-10 bite-sized chunks rather than lengthy discussions. If you have new hires with shorter attention spans or who get overwhelmed easily, this can be a great strategy to use.

Rapid Door & Trim uses Trainual for onboarding software and Loom for screen recording. When combined, these two pieces of technology create a way for new remote hires to shadow employees at work. Employees record their computer screens with Loom, then drop the recordings in Trainual for hires to watch at their own pace (or read through in a transcript). In this way, technology allows even remote employees to learn from peers without disturbing their workflow.



**PROJECT
MANAGEMENT
SOFTWARE**



**LEARNING
MANAGEMENT
SOFTWARE**



**SCREEN
RECORDING
SOFTWARE**

5. Think Long-Term

As older generations of workers retire, the construction industry needs new faces. That's why it's important to remember how training can impact the big picture. New employees are the future of your business and the door, frame, and hardware industry. Their training will shape the knowledge that is passed down through future generations. This is another reason to encourage older employees to share their experience with newcomers whenever possible.

In HID Global's All Access Podcast, security professionals agree that younger and older generations should learn from each other as much as they can; older generations have the experience, and younger generations have the technology.

"Our innovation is their legacy," says Katie Greatti, associate director of learning and development at the Security Industry Association. "If you don't have anybody to learn from or to challenge you, on both ends of the spectrum, you're not going to innovate."

In this way, training is an opportunity. Feel empowered to share your knowledge with your employees, and to pair them up with experienced mentors, as this is how valuable information is

kept alive. But also feel empowered to listen to employee perspectives and learn from them. Connecting both ways across generations will keep the future of the industry dynamic and bright.

Another way to connect is by offering continuous education for new and old employees – going beyond onboarding to offer constant learning resources. Your whole staff will benefit from learning more about the industry because the industry is always changing.

Maryville University states, "employee training and development programs can help staff stay up to date on changes in their industry, such as in ethics, safety, or quality standards. They also can show staff new ways to think and work, employing updated technology and processes and educating workers about cybersecurity threats."

Moreover, continuously exploring new topics and tools will help you stay on the cutting edge of productivity and innovation. Your business will not only boast effective employees but also become a force of positive change in the whole industry as more professionals keep their knowledge alive.

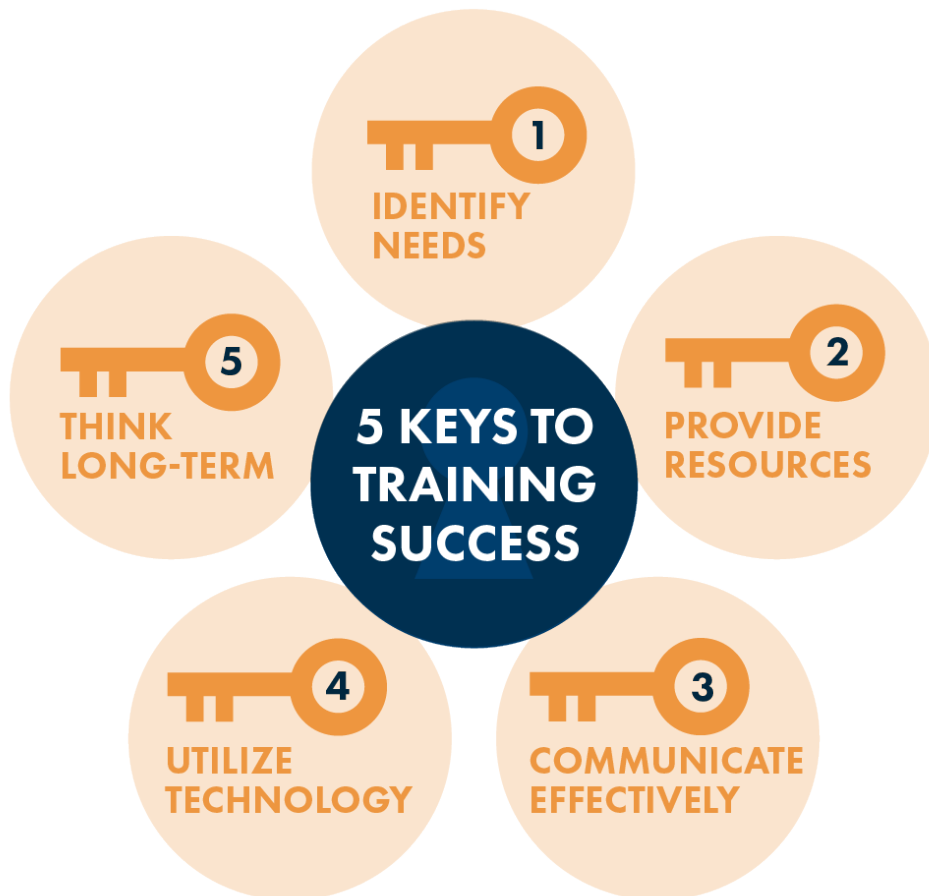
"Their training will shape the future of the industry."



Conclusion

Training is no easy task in this industry. It takes a close analysis of a new hire's needs, the proper budget and time allotted to providing resources, effective communication, adoption of helpful modern technology, and a big-picture mindset to meet long-term goals. While one might see the new wave of workers – many of them millennials – as a challenge in training, they are also a solution. Young, motivated workers bring

new perspectives and technological skills to an industry that can benefit greatly from change and innovation. At the same time, experienced employees have much valuable knowledge to share and pass down to them. When generations of people work together to achieve expectations and explore new methods through consideration of the other's knowledge, we build a bright future for the door, frame, and hardware industry.



Software

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