

Creating an In-House Training Program

In Part One of this article in the last issue of ID&OI, we discussed the Who, What and When of developing an in-house training program for door dealers. In this installment, we will examine the where and how.

One of the biggest challenges door dealers face when developing an employee training program is a lack of space. Most of us devote space to offices, warehouses and showrooms, with little left for anything else. However, once you make the decision to move forward with a training program, you will be surprised at how creative you can be with a limited amount of space.

Initially, we tried using our warehouse for training, but street noise and distractions from deliveries, trucks loading

and fluctuations in seasonal temperatures made it clear that we needed a venue more comfortable and conducive to learning. Eventually, we modified our conference room to accommodate a classroom, and used a bay in our warehouse as a tech lab for hands-on training. When we outgrew both of those spaces we built dedicated classroom and tech lab spaces, by repurposing space we already owned. Our training program finally had a home.

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Training
Room
2001

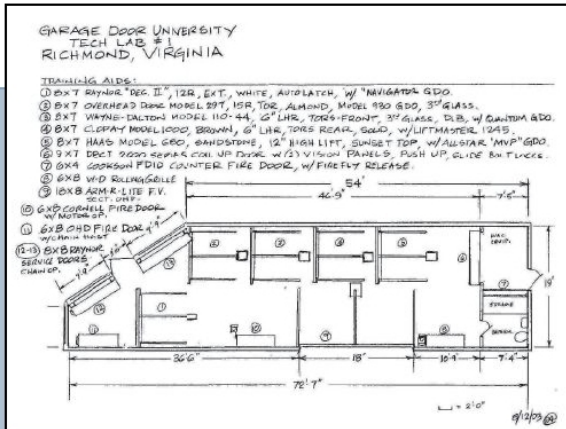


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Garage Door University Tech Lab



A preliminary sketch of our Tech Lab



Our Tech Lab

Training Aids

Classroom and tech lab setups require a significant investment in training aids and teaching tools.

For Classroom:

- Folding tables and chairs
- Projector and screen
- Computer and PowerPoint software
- Internet access
- Dry erase boards and flip charts
- VCR/DVD player
- Training handouts and ancillary materials
- Testing materials
- Washroom facilities

For Tech Lab:

- Framed garage door training bays
- Garage doors and openers for training exercises
- Hand and power tools for up to 6 training positions
- Washroom facilities

No one item carried significant cost, but added together the investment in our training materials and facilities was sizable. Our initial investment was about \$30K for the facility build-out and the additional training aids. We looked to our suppliers for assistance with doors and other materials needed for hands-on training in the Tech Lab. It was a huge expense for something unproven, but the investment (gamble) quickly paid off. In the first year, we “graduated” six new installers, and their production in the first three months that followed easily covered our initial investment in the new training facilities.

Investment in People

How much does it cost to train a tech? I always tell our clients that they will never stop investing in developing talent for their organizations if they are wise. Let’s face it, people

are the most valuable asset a dealer has. And like other investments, they need to be watched over and nurtured to maximize the greatest possible return. While philosophical, that fails to answer the original question.

Here is example of training costs and ROI for the first three years of a new tech hire:

Year 1		
Wages for first year		\$41,600
O.T. wages assuming 5 hours/week		\$7,500
Fringe benefits and taxes		\$14,730
Onboarding Cost (testing, background check, etc.)		\$200
Formal training by professional instructor:		
Basic installation training	40 hours @ \$35/hr.	\$1,400.00
Intermediate training	20 hours @ \$35/hr.	\$700.00
Advanced training	20 hours @ \$35/hr.	\$700
Total up front investment		\$66,830

Year 2		
Production first 6 months @ \$1000/day avg.		\$120,000
Production next 6 months @ \$1400/day avg.		\$168,000
Total Production Year 2		\$288,000
Estimated Net Profit @ 6%		\$17,280
Net return on up front investment		26%

Year 3		
Production @ \$1600/day avg.		\$416,000
Estimated Net Profit @ 6%		\$24,960
Net return on up front investment		37%

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Yes, training is expensive and yes, there are no guarantees that the new hire will be an employee for life. But I can tell you, for those door dealers I know that invested in a robust, in-house training program, the returns have been too great to measure. Investing in people by making training part of doing business helps solve the problem of turnover in our industry, resulting in full productivity, a healthy bottom line and higher levels of customer satisfaction.



In development of human talent, it is reasonable to expect a return. Sure, it is difficult to make that big up-front investment in a new hire but with proper training, you will see a tremendous return on your investment! Investing in people is always in your best interest.

Helping someone with minimal skills grow from entry level to master garage door technician is a satisfaction that is tough to rival. The added profits for your company is icing on the cake!

Documenting Your Results

It is important to document and track the progress of your new hire. Be sure to record attendance at training sessions and update each employee's personnel file. We used this information as part of periodic reviews, annual performance appraisals, raises and promotions. Our techs could not progress to the next level without first completing training and demonstrating their knowledge and technical abilities.

Credentials

When recruiting applicants, it is important to point out the benefits of the training you provide and, if applicable, your financial support for credentialing through IDEA.

Yes, there is always a risk that the employee takes the training and credential with them if they move to another employer. But what if the person stays? If I do lose a tech and they become a competitor, I'd rather they be well-trained and certified. Smart competitors only benefit our industry.

The pride I witnessed in our techs as they passed tests and received their certifications from IDEA was well deserved and gratifying.

These numbers will vary based on a number of factors, but the model is essentially the same for most door dealers. By investing

For more information about the industry's certification programs, visit <https://www.dooreducation.com/certification/>.

Summary

For many garage door dealers, recruiting technical talent is priority number one. Taking the same old actions and expecting different results is not productive. Yes, training is expensive and yes, there are no guarantees that the new hire will be an employee for life. But I can tell you, for those door dealers I know that invested in a robust, in-house training program, the returns have been too great to measure.

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Now what's that worth?



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Dan served as president of Apple Door Systems in Richmond, Virginia, for 33 years. The company grew into a statewide dealership with eight locations. He was the first president of the Institute of Door Dealer Education and Accreditation (IDEA), where he was responsible for creating the industry's first national accreditation program in 1998. Dan also served as a director of the Door & Operator Dealers Association (DODA) and IDA from 1994-1998.

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