

# LUNCH & LEARNS

There never seems to be enough time during the day to get everything done. You can't spare people to go to training because there is so much work to do, but you also can't neglect their training and development. Lunch & Learn is a way to get more training done by making the lunch hour multi-tasking.

## **What Is Lunch & Learn?**

At its simplest, a Lunch & Learn program is a training event scheduled during the lunch hour. Employees who attend bring their lunches and eat them during the training session. The training is usually less formal and less structured than normal.

Lunch & Learn programs to encourage conversations around cultural and linguistic competency could include:

### *Skills Training*

This can range from teaching employees how to answer the phone in multiple languages, or how to access translator services.

### *Anecdotes from the Field*

Direct service workers can share their experiences from the field, to highlight the “boots on the ground” experience. These stories can also be used as case studies, to problem-solve policies or patient needs. This experience can be especially helpful for administration to learn more about the clients served by the organization.

### *Professional Development*

Give people an opportunity to learn what people in other departments do. Administrators could share their program development process, or highlight new emerging trends. Maybe someone in HR could teach a session on how to interview better.

### *Personal Development*

A Learn at Lunch program does not have to be strictly business. You could offer an occasional session on any topic your employees may want to share, such as ethnic food, religious rituals (or the meaning behind holidays) or other unique aspects of their culture. This will help your employees learn more about diverse cultures in a relaxed and fun setting.

## **What Lunch & Learns are NOT**

- Lunch & Learns are not the time to do training that is required, either by law or by the company. Don't use Lunch & Learn programs for anything where you need to keep track of who attends.
- Lunch & Learns are not good for anything that cannot be covered in 30-45 minutes. People need time to get to the sessions and ask questions and get back to their jobs so keep it brief and focused.

## **How to Start a Lunch & Learn Program**

There are many variations of a Lunch & Learn program. You need to tailor the basics to what works for your company and its culture.

Some planning needs to be done ahead of time and some of it will flow once the program starts. Some things you need to think about ahead of time include:

### *Topics*

You need to select the topics for the Lunch & Learn program. See the suggestions above for some examples, but you can select whatever makes sense for your organization.

### *Recruiting*

You will need speakers and trainers to deliver the training in the Lunch & Learn sessions. Many people will complain that they are too busy. Stress the fact that it is short and informal. Tell them how valuable their knowledge is and how good it would be to share that with the rest of the employees.

### *Locations*

Pick a place that is supportive of both eating and training. Lunch rooms or cafeterias usually are not a good choice because they tend to be too noisy for the training to be effective. Conference rooms are a good choice. Depending on your location, outdoors can be good too.

### *Lunch*

Usually, people bring their own lunches. Sometimes, to make it a special event, the company may want to provide lunch to get a better turnout. For example, if you are having a presentation on the company's latest product, you might want to attract people from many groups. Free lunch of something simple like pizza can help pull them in.

## **Benefits of Lunch & Learns**

- The biggest benefit of a Lunch & Learn program is that you are able to get more training delivered to your employees at minimal additional cost.
- A Lunch & Learn program doesn't make more hours in the day, but it makes better use of the time you have.
- The trainers enjoy the spotlight of being able to share their expertise with others in the company.
- Lunch & Learns can foster conversations and help employees appreciate the diversity within their workgroup.