



RIGHT TIME. RIGHT PLACE. RIGHT SOLUTION.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ONGOING TRAINING





## Your Most Important Asset

The most important asset your company possesses is its human capital. The staff that your credit union employs is the face of your organization, its voice over the phone, and its library of collective knowledge. Much like the Episys Core Processing Platform integrates with third-party vendors, your staff is your seamless integration component between your organization and your membership. In an age when job transitions are becoming more and more frequent, how do you keep your valued employees at your credit union year after year?

Ongoing training has been proven to be one of the largest contributors to ongoing employee satisfaction in the workplace. Promotions and new responsibilities are precipitating factors to offer training in new areas, as well as refreshers in areas that may not have been utilized regularly. In a time when technology and fintech are advancing faster than ever before, ongoing training also is an opportunity to gain insight in embracing new ways to provide services to credit union members.

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**A *training* organization means that the pressure falls on the trainer to “bring it.” It tends to put the employees in a passive mode. A *learning* organization emphasizes that all employees are students and pupils. They become pro-active about their learning and development.**

*Rick Olson, Credit Union Industry Consultant*

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In this white paper, we will examine the importance of ongoing education for credit union professionals, including:

- Creating an environment of competent, highly skilled individuals
- Improved job satisfaction and morale
- Offering opportunities through Synergent training
- Increased retention of employees by providing the opportunity for career development and personal growth



## Creating an Environment of Competent, Highly Skilled Individuals

Offering professional development opportunities to credit union staff must be a priority for both new hires and seasoned professionals. *I've worked here for 10 years, what is left to learn?* The answer? There is always something new to learn.

New products and services are introduced frequently, but established systems often have updates or underutilized functionalities. In the case of established systems and services, trainees have reported fear of asking questions of their managers due to worry of conveying a lack of intelligence or confidence. The importance of creating a supportive learning environment through training cannot be overstated. Amber Reed, a trainer at Synergent, shared: "Many trainees leave our education sessions with more confidence than they had coming in because they were able to learn in an unthreatening atmosphere among their credit union peers."

Technology and regulatory matters are two areas that constantly evolve and are good models to reference in examining the importance of training for seasoned employees. They are prime examples of a curriculum that consistently offers something new for everyone. Dan Byron is the President and CEO of Eastmill Federal Credit Union in East Millinocket, ME. Creating an environment of skilled employees is a top priority for Byron. "I encourage our staff to stay up-to-date with all of the changes in technology-related services. The other major area of training is addressing all the regulatory changes that are occurring throughout the financial industry," stated Byron.

Opportunities for new hires and experienced staff to train together create a unique, inspiring experience for attendees that can make a significant impact on both your staff and their careers. The National Credit Union Foundation offers a week-long Credit Union Development Education Program that seeks to link the cooperative history of credit unions to the present-day staff, with the philosophy of "People Helping People." From new employees to executives and credit union professionals of all tenures in between, the session mixes group exercises with field trips, speakers, and team projects. Since 1982, 1,400 credit union professionals from over 34 countries have earned their CUDE certifications. It has become so popular, sessions now can fill a year in advance.

Christopher Morris, a credit union industry communications expert, blogged about his 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of attending Credit Union Development Education when he was new to the credit union industry. "I learned all about the credit union system in detail. What are corporates? What do leagues do? What does CUNA Mutual do? NCUA? ... Credit union people are amazing. There is so much more I learned in the sessions, but it was the people too that changed my life," wrote Morris.



## Improved Job Satisfaction and Morale

As an industry that exceeds credit union member expectations, empirical evidence proves we must excel and exceed staff expectations in the area of training. A recent study conducted at Salisbury University proved that positive experiences with job training mean positive attitudes about receiving training, which correlate to positive feelings about work capabilities. Essentially, positive, quality training experiences yield confident employees who believe in the importance of their work. In the study of 237 full-time employees, it was found that 86.8% of those who had received updated training believed they were proficient at their jobs. Those who had not received updated training overwhelmingly believed they were not proficient. The study states, "Positive training offered to employees may assist with reduction of anxiety or frustration, which most employees have experienced on more than one occasion during their employment careers."

Continuing professional education empowers credit union staff, alleviates worries, and allows for teamwork to flourish through the sharing of knowledge. Investing in training is a sure way to convey that your credit union employees are valued and supported, which yields higher job satisfaction.

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**Training provides hands-on learning opportunities on the latest and greatest features that our products have to offer. Staff can take the new tools and skills they've learned and apply them to provide a better experience to members, meeting their evolving needs.**

*Ben Jordan, Senior Vice President of Product Development, Synergent*

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Regardless of whether training is delivered in a webinar or in-person format, the effects of attending a training can have a ripple effect that goes far beyond the individual who attended. "We encourage our staff to share the knowledge from their training," stated Byron. "This brings pride and satisfaction to our staff members who have received the training and an increased knowledge level to the recipients."



## Meeting the Needs of Credit Unions

Opportunities for professional development are abundant at Synergent. Webinars, on-site trainings at Synergent, and custom trainings at credit unions ensure there are Payments and Technology offerings to meet the varied needs of credit unions. Kathy Newman, Director of Technical Communications, directs and organizes the day-to-day operations and oversight of Synergent training. She carefully develops standards for training and presentations that ensure clear, concise educational processes.

“Synergent offers a curriculum of hands-on and webinar training sessions, seminars, and user conferences intended to increase awareness and advance the skills of credit unions using core and payment platforms, including add-on and third party products,” described Newman. “We install a major upgrade of our Episys software twice each year. It’s important for the credit unions to receive ongoing training to keep their skills sharp with the new functionality.”

“In my opinion, what Synergent does better than any other vendor, is the training we offer credit unions during conversion,” said Jordan. “We subscribe to the ‘train all employees’ approach, where every credit union staff member receives hands-on training on the new core processing system from one of our Implementation & Training Analysts.” Because credit union employees train on their own existing converted member data, the training experience closely mimics the live environment.

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**Our staff attends multiple webinars and some on-site training.  
Due to our location, the webinar format works best for us.**

*Dan Byron, President/CEO, Eastmill FCU, East Millinocket, Maine*

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## Providing the Opportunity for Career Development and Personal Growth

Ongoing training is cited as a top way to retain your best talent. It is rare in this era for employees to stay at one employer for an entire career. By ensuring your staff has regular, relevant training to update their essential skills, you are keeping them interested and motivated, and are reducing staff turnover. The key is finding training that pertains not only to their current role, but also is relevant to their long-term career goals. Shelagh Dillon of Demand Media recently wrote, “For most professionals, continuous learning is a crucial part of the job as technology and legislation constantly change. Being a member of any professional association or society involves having a formal record of ongoing training.”

Jason Silberman, lead author and editor of TrainingStation, also examined education in his blog, *The Advantages of Ongoing Training for Employees*. He highlights that training is essential, even after an employee has attained the requisite understanding of his or her job functions and develops knowledge capital. “Induction and initial training are only a foundation for an ongoing process. Organizations have to analyze their needs on a regular basis to identify gaps and then come up with appropriate training programs,” Silberman shared.

Continued training also stimulates loyalty within an organization. By offering employees the opportunity to learn new proficiencies to add to their skill set, they become—and most importantly feel like—an asset to your credit union.

Empowered, well-trained staff possess the self-motivation to actively seek out solutions. “The Payments industry is always changing,” says Reed. “Members are going to ask new questions and you will want to be prepared.” Since 2008, Synergent has been a masterful resource that fields questions from credit unions of varying sizes in many locations. “We have over 80 credit unions asking us different questions every day that we research.”

Seeking out educational opportunities also keeps employees interested and engaged in their role, whether brand new to the credit union world or a long-time credit union veteran.

“Remember those teachers in school who were set in their ways and never wanted to try anything new? Remember how bored you were and how much you dreaded going to their class? Don’t be them. Always try to learn or try something new. Members and colleagues alike will appreciate it!” said Reed.

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**The greatest investment you can make is training your staff  
to effectively serve and grow your membership.**

*Jennifer Berry, Assistant Vice President, Conversions and Training*

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