

CBTnu ets

Internal Training Initiative:

An Unconventional Approach to L&D

AUTHORS

STEVEN HATTRUP

KARIN KLINGER

SEAN NELSON

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Summary of CBT Nuggets

CBT Nuggets provides innovative online training that's informative, meaningful, and engaging, covering material for information technology, programming, project management, and office productivity topics.

CBT Nuggets has been in the IT training industry for over 20 years and provides a learning experience that includes:

- Video training,
- Validated learning through embedded quizzes,
- Practice exams for certification preparation,
- Virtual labs to practice new skills,
- A learner community for increasing collaboration, and
- Accountability coaches to help drive performance and learning progress.

Our holistic approach to learning equips learners whether they want to pass a certification exam, improve their skills, or simply learn a new technology.

Commitment to learning

CBT Nuggets is committed to learning, not only providing an excellent learning experience for our customers, but also supporting the learning and continuous improvement of our team members. As a result, in January 2017, we launched a new Internal Training Initiative. The Internal Training Initiative included the establishment of Team Training, which was tasked with providing direction and resources to meet the ongoing learning and professional development needs of every team member.

This team functions with a great degree of autonomy and independence, working to discover and meet the learning needs of the organization's 150 team members. There are two main philosophies that drive the Internal Training Initiative: Team members will dedicate 30 minutes every day to training, and that training should be unique to each team member's skill set.

CBT Nuggets Internal Training Initiative

We promote the CBT Nuggets mission of continual improvement by providing the resources and time necessary for professional growth. Team members train daily, using both CBT Nuggets videos and resources specific to their respective areas of expertise. This initiative is intended to empower team members to advance their knowledge and skills in order to improve the organization and our product.

CBT Nuggets content training

CBT Nuggets specializes in providing high-quality training content for IT professionals. Team members are expected to engage with entry-level content that they can most readily understand; while also developing an expanded understanding of the needs of our customers.

Professional development and expertise training

With our pledge to foster continuous improvement, we expect each team member to work diligently to develop their unique areas of expertise. Whether it's a member of our finance team earning continuing education credits toward their CPA credentials, a UX designer improving their prototyping skills, a manager becoming a better leader, or a software engineer learning a new programming language or technology, we support our team members in their ongoing professional development. Team Training provides the following services to the organization:

- Customized learning paths,
- Training performance reports and accountability,
- Cross-departmental and contextual training programs, and
- Company-wide product demonstrations.

Customized learning paths

Team Training conducts training evaluations with team members during which they are asked to identify areas of expertise, passion, and professional development goals. Among other questions, Team Training specifically asks:

- What technologies, software, or tools are you most excited to learn?
- What skills would you like to develop or pursue?
- What do you want or hope to achieve in the next six months?

These evaluations result in a customized and curated learning path — a document that provides a list of resources and learning opportunities designed to meet the unique needs of each team member. Learning paths connect team members' passions and professional

development through purpose-driven training that contributes to the achievement of their goal(s).

Training performance reports & accountability

Since Team Training launched the Internal Training Initiative, we've seen significant growth among CBT Nuggets team members, measurable improvements in commitment to learning, and milestone achievements that have positively impacted the organization.

One-third of team members report having earned an industry certification as a result of their learning efforts through CBT Nuggets. In addition, 91% of team members agree or strongly agree that the daily training requirement has helped them learn and grow professionally.

In order to hold team members accountable to their training expectations, Team Training provides regular reporting on training performance to team leads and the Chief Operations Officer. If a trend of poor training performance emerges, Team Training schedules an accountability meeting with the team member. These sessions identify what obstacles are getting in the way of learning and help to develop strategies to navigate those obstacles moving forward.

Team Training is committed to equipping team members to meet their training expectations. Working with team members to address obstacles to training may require ongoing accountability work. On average, through 2019, only 2.77% of team members require accountability meetings, demonstrating an organization-wide commitment to the learning initiative.

Cross-departmental & contextual training programs

Team Training provides cross-departmental and contextual training opportunities designed to meet the unique needs of the organization. Cross-departmental training opportunities, designed to foster collaboration and improve work efficiencies, allow team members to connect with one another across the organization. These cross-team culture-building opportunities build team member engagement and connection to the organization.

In addition, Team Training provides contextual training programs that meet specific learning needs for team members. For example, Team Training created a self-paced Active Listening learning path and a five-week Introduction to IT learning experience, including periodic knowledge checks and a final validation quiz for customer-facing teams.

Company-wide product demonstrations

Team Training facilitates bi-monthly company-wide demonstrations discussing new external products, feature releases, and internal initiatives. The demos act as a 15-minute town hall-style meeting where team members are encouraged to ask questions and provide feedback.

Measuring success

In order to measure the success of the Internal Training Initiative, Team Training focuses on two factors: a team member’s training health score and the achievement of their six-month goal(s). These measurements showcase the commitment toward continual improvement and progression of team members’ professional development.

Training health score

Team Training has developed a method of weighting the training that team members record to generate an Internal Training Health Score.

Team members’ training generally falls into three categories: Expertise training, CBT Nuggets training, and product demos. The most important categories of training, and therefore the most heavily weighted in the health score, are expertise training and CBT Nuggets training. The training a team member records from these categories make up two-thirds of the health score, while performance on product demo quizzes makes up one-third of the overall score.

Though CBT Nuggets requires all team members to train daily, the main focus of the initiative is habitual improvement. Team Training developed the Internal Training Health Score to measure active engagement with the Internal Training Initiative and identify team members whose efforts may be declining. In addition, the Internal Training Health Score tracks the effectiveness of training over time.

Internal training health score formula

$$\begin{aligned}
 &(((\text{Training Recorded} \div (\text{Working Days} \times 30 \text{ Minutes})) \times .66) \\
 &\quad + \\
 &((\text{Quiz Points Scored} \div \text{Quiz Points Possible}) \times .33)) \times 100 \\
 &= \\
 &\text{Internal Training Health Score (\%)}
 \end{aligned}$$

Between 2017 and 2019, the average Internal Training Health Score for CBT Nuggets was 92%, which shows team members actively engaged with the Internal Training Initiative. Moreover, there exists a statistically significant positive correlation between hours trained and Training Health Score for all years of data (2017 to 2019). A Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.370 with a p-value less than 0.000 was evaluated; indicating we can predict with great confidence that a team member's health score will increase with the more hours they train.

In addition, Team Training has improved the effectiveness of training since the initiation of the department as measured by the outcomes of the training health score.

Progress is the model: six-month goals

Helping team members set measurable and attainable goals is critical for their success. Team members identify six-month goals to work toward ranging from earning professional development certifications and mastering new programming languages, to becoming more confident with public speaking and more.

It's important to help team members determine a worthy goal — and why training itself is crucial. Team Training assists team members in understanding the purpose behind training and development in order to make these goals more relevant to their professional development.

Team members receive surveys measuring the achievement of the goals they identified during their training evaluation: 64.08% of the individuals reported achieving their goals. And for the respondents who reported that they did not achieve their six-month goal, 29.73% indicated their professional development goals were not achieved due to outside factors including changes in their position or role, organizational or team priorities, or learning direction.

Create your own Internal Training Initiative

Implementing a successful training initiative requires commitment from every team and member of leadership; so much so that it becomes a tenet of an organization's culture. CBT Nuggets started off focusing on three foundational concepts for their Internal Training Initiative and built them up once there was proven success: tracking activity, measuring success, and gaining buy-in and budget.

Tracking training activity

CBT Nuggets is fortunate in that it has a talented pool of software engineers who have contributed to the creation and development of tools and reports that contribute to the success of the Internal Training Initiative. Team Training uses two internal tools for individuals to self-report training activity:

- **Training dashboard** - team members record their training activities and view their progress toward their monthly training goals via a Dashboard, accessible from any web browser.
- **Training tracker** - team members use a timer to track their training and see their progress toward achieving their weekly/monthly training goal through a downloadable desktop app.

These tools allow Team Training to monitor training and training habits — and intervene where necessary.

Measuring success & reporting

Team Training relies heavily on Tableau to access, analyze, and distribute training reports. Tableau is a data visualization tool through which Team Training has created a variety of reports that are distributed to team leads on a monthly basis including:

- **Individual training performance** - displays the individual activity of a team member, including total time spent training and specific training topics;
- **Individual training health score** - measures a team member's engagement with the Internal Training Initiative; and
- **Departmental training performance** - measures the overall training performance for the team, identifying teams that are meeting and exceeding their training requirements and those who are struggling to meet the requirements.

Early stages of the Internal Training Initiative at CBT Nuggets made use of free (or nearly free) applications and tools that are readily available to most Learning & Development professionals. Though our custom Training Dashboard, Training Tracker, and Tableau reports have been beneficial and represent the maturity of the program, they are not necessary to launch your own Internal Training Initiative. Many of the tracking and reporting objectives these tools achieve can be similarly achieved using Google Sheets and Forms, Microsoft Excel, or similar products.

Buy-in & budget

When implementing any training initiative, getting buy-in from your executive and leadership teams is crucial. Communicating the opportunities for improvement and your strategy for connecting these programs to your organization's objectives will increase the likelihood of gaining approval and support. One of the biggest hurdles many organizations may face is securing a budget. Remember: Connecting the value of training to professional and organizational growth will help leaders better understand the benefits and positive outcomes of a training initiative.

CBT Nuggets is fortunate to have a strong organizational commitment to learning, which allows Team Training to leverage funding to provide training resources. Team members are provided with books, online training subscriptions, and opportunities to attend professional development conferences. While other organizations may not have similar budget opportunities, the diversity and volume of affordable training resources make an Internal Training Initiative possible for organizations of any size.

According to [Training Magazine](#), during 2019, on average, companies spent \$1,286 per learner compared to \$986 per learner the previous year. Nonprofit organizations spent the most during 2019 (\$1,889), followed by manufacturers and distributors (\$1,781). Midsize companies spent less (\$829) than large (\$1,544) and small (\$1,511) companies.

CBT Nuggets spends approximately 3.5% more than the national average per team member for our Internal Training Initiative. Though spending is slightly above the national average, the organization continues to be at the cutting edge of technological advances and maintains a high degree of expertise through industry certifications held by a majority of eligible team members.

Conclusion

Developing an Internal Training Initiative has provided CBT Nuggets with great opportunities to support our team members in their pursuit of improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities. We demonstrate our dedication to our team members' growth by putting forth sufficient funds and time to create an organization-wide initiative that aligns with our organization's mission and commitment to learning. The Internal Training Initiative provides team members with resources to continuously improve via customized learning paths, internal training tools, cross-departmental and contextual training, online training subscriptions, and opportunities to attend professional development conferences and workshops.

For organizations wishing to launch an Internal Training Initiative or program, they should consider:

- Providing dedicated time for team members to train;
- Securing financial resources to provide access to appropriate training resources (including conference attendance, online resources, and/or development of tracking tools, etc.);
- Developing buy-in from upper management.

The effort CBT Nuggets has put into this initiative has paid off in a number of ways:

- One-third of team members have earned an industry certification;
- Over 90% of team members agree the daily training requirement has aided their learning and growth;
- Training has become more effective; and
- Two-thirds of team members report successful achievement of their six-month professional development goals.

This example of a successful training initiative may help other organizations develop or build upon their own programs to support growth and improvement for their teams and organizations.