**Professional Development………Who pays?**

By The Antigua and Barbuda National Accreditation Board (ABNAB)

In today’s fast-paced environment, businesses must be flexible and be willing to adapt to new realities if they want to avoid being pushed aside, or run over. Re-education, re-training and re-tooling are essential lifelines for these entities. Similarly, learning institutions must also keep pace with all the changes taking place and provide growth opportunities for both faculty and staff.

For the past two weeks, ABNAB has been looking at Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and suggesting that institutions use this mechanism to keep staff members up to date.

But, as we all know, nothing is free. More importantly….who pays for this training?

Some persons feel that the individuals whose skill sets and competencies are being enhanced are the ones who should bear the full cost of the training. After all, they will, at the end of the training, be more empowered and better skilled. They can move to another job with better benefits.

On the other hand, the institution is also a beneficiary of the knowledge gained. So why shouldn’t the institution be responsible for training? Is it fair that the institution benefits at the expense of the employees?

There is merit to both arguments. Both the individual and the institution do benefit from properly executed professional development activities and therefore should have no problems investing.

**Reasons why companies should invest in training**

1. A company with a well-known policy of investing in its employees will attract high quality applicants and will be able to select the best persons to fill vacancies whenever they do arise.

2. A professional development policy helps retention. If employees receive opportunities for training and the financial upgrades likely to go along with it, there is the likelihood that employees will remain with the company longer, as they see themselves growing with the organization.

3. Employees feel valued and will put out their best.

4. Productivity is increased if persons are well trained.

**Reasons why employees should invest in their own training**

1. In this day and age, professional development is a must. Growth is essential so it is wise to invest in yourself.

2. The knowledge gained is forever yours.

3. You become more marketable.

4. (For teachers particularly). As educators, you must be ‘constant learners’ and model that behaviour for your students to see.

**Cost-sharing approaches**

Since everyone benefits, we suggest that consideration be given to the following cost sharing methods which have been used by companies locally as well as in other parts of the world.

1. **Reimbursement after successful completion:**

One approach used by some companies/institutions is to reimburse employees who have used their own resources and have successfully completed an approved programme of study. In some cases, there is 100% reimbursement while other companies offer partial reimbursement. This arrangement is quite a good one if the employee has the means to pay for the course ‘up front’. Regrettably, this approach does not help the employee who does not have the financial resources to do so.

1. **Partly Finance “up front”:**

Another cost sharing approach is one in which the company/institution undertakes to finance ‘up front’ a portion of the cost of the programme of study and the employee finances the remainder. That way the burden is shared ‘up front’ and the employee never has to find funds for the entire programme.

1. **Total Financing by company and give back through training others by employee:**

Another approach is one in which the programme of study is totally financed by the employer and the employee ‘repays’ by passing on the knowledge gained to other employees through workshops and similar learning situations so that, over time, more than one person benefits from the employer’s investment.

The story has been told about the owner of a very successful business who grumbled about the money she was spending on professional development for staff members. She kept pressing her manager to find ways to reduce the cost. Eventually, he approached her with a solution. ‘Madam,’ he said in a soft voice, ‘We can save money by eliminating professional development entirely and just trust to luck that your employees will operate at the level you desire.’