

# ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE CHANGE

## Through Instructor Certification Program (ICP<sup>SM</sup>) - A Case Study



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*"... trapped in a belief that my knowledge is my security, and your lack of knowledge is also my security..." is how the manager of a reputable and growing bottling organization described the culture when he approached Polytron for assistance.*

### INTRODUCTION

The foundation for the engagement was the belief that teaching methods of effective knowledge transfer would increase overall communication, information sharing, and knowledge retention within a workforce. The challenge was to become familiar with the existing culture so that an instructor certification program could be modified and adapted to fit the needs of not only the organization, but also the culture of the trainer candidates.

## SITUATION

The need to establish an Instructor Certification Program (ICP<sup>SM</sup>) in order to facilitate effective knowledge transfer was driven by two known factors: (1) the accepted culture of withholding and resisting knowledge, and (2) updated equipment or new production lines.

The accepted culture of withholding and resisting knowledge was a byproduct of a workforce that spent a high percentage of their tenure in one production position within the same department.

And, as with any packaging and manufacturing organization, this bottling plant had a combination of old and new equipment, often on the same production line. Training for new procedures often resulted in confusion, frustration, and downtime.

With the organization's existing culture and equipment training requirements the implementation of proven knowledge transfer methods was key.



## CHALLENGES

Any organization embracing successful knowledge transfer seeks to provide a motivational learning environment relative to the needs of the workforce. That goal is often difficult to accomplish if the teaching processes used by individual trainers are not consistent in instructional style and presentation.

While long-term employee retention provided an economical advantage, it also resulted in resistance to change. Job tenure and limited migration between departments fostered an old-fashioned view of how to present, receive, and apply knowledge that was similar across the organization, including:

- **Unwillingness to Share Knowledge** – under the old adage of “knowledge is power,” withholding knowledge became a way to maintain a higher status in the workforce.
- **Unwillingness to Learn Knowledge** – among some individuals, there was a belief that avoidance of training would result in less responsibility for errors.
- **Culture of Non-participation in Meetings** – others viewed training as a time to take a break from working, while supervisors recited statistics as a training method.

Training opportunities were continuous with upgrades to safety elements, installation of new equipment or production lines, and new interfaces and features on older equipment.

However, training methodologies remained unchanged for over 30 years. Often, there was a knowledge dump at the equipment with little hands-on operation and no accountability or training confirmation for trainer nor student to ensure successful knowledge transfer.

## SOLUTION

The Instructor Certification Program was adapted to provide a structure, complete with supporting skills, which would make the training process effective and consistent. This included:

- **Modifying the ICP Program** – revising pre-delivery, instructional, and measurement processes to address culture of withholding and resisting new information.
- **Implementing ICP Program** – applying a performance-based approach to engage students and trainees in both classroom and hands-on learning.



Specific to the needs of the organization, two certified roles were developed. The Certified Trainer role was created to be the focal position for knowledge transfer and the Certified Auditor role as a planning, auditing, and reporting support function.

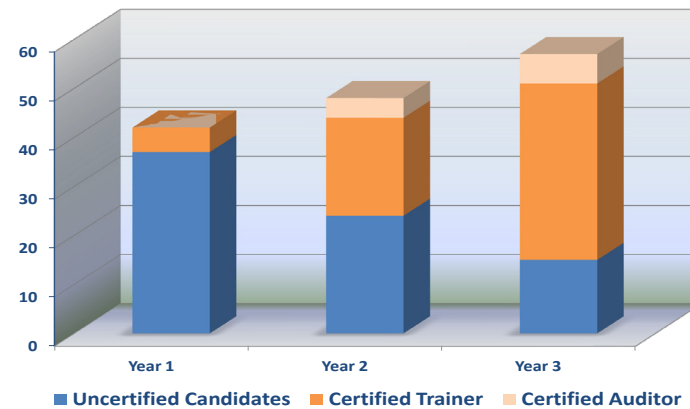
Each certification requires a 3-day ICP class. As part of the certification, the Trainer must conduct a successful learning event within thirty days. The Auditor must hold a successful learning event *and* complete an audit of another trainer’s learning event.

Understanding that culture change within the organization would take time; the ICP program was implemented over three years, allowing for ample feedback and acceptance within the overall organization and providing time for the effectiveness of the performance-based Training Methodology to be noticed and embraced.

## BENEFITS

As the benefits of training methods for effective knowledge transfer became evident, the value of training within the overall culture of the organization began to change. This was evidenced in the statistics of the ICP class, changes in the behavior of withholding and resisting knowledge, and an increased consistency in training methodologies.

As word of the ICP program’s success spread, more instructor candidates attended. Shown in the chart below, the overall number of candidates increased each year (Year 1 – 43; Year 2 - 48; Year 3 - 57), and the total number obtaining certification increased 400% during the second year and an additional 30% during the third year (Year 1 –5; Year 2 - 23; Year 3 -36)



With Certified Trainers and Auditors applying consistent methods to prepare for training, presenting information, and confirming student knowledge on topics discussed, the culture of withholding and resisting knowledge began to decrease.



## RESULTS

Applying the ICP methodology not only improved knowledge transfer to the organization's Operator and Maintenance staff, but also created open discussions between Certified Trainers and Auditors to build best practices and hold OEM trainers accountable. Certified Trainer and Auditor feedback included:

**On Unwillingness to Share Knowledge** – *“Before I attended ICP, I was really afraid when I conducted training. I learned how to share information and control questions.”*

**On Unwillingness to Learn Knowledge** – *“ICP gave me what I needed to focus on any topic, as a teacher or student. I'm a process kind of person and this gave me a process to use.”*

**On Culture of Non-participation in Meetings** – *“Instead of just standing around and reading the material, I've learned to have a handout for everyone and to provide interesting information we didn't know before. The discussion keeps everyone engaged.”*

**Team Leaders and Managers noticed culture changes within six months of implementing ICP.** As training events became more consistent throughout the organization, interest in attending and participating in training increased.

By the second year of the engagement, subject matter experts who had not yet attended ICP, but had participated in successful training events, were starting to use Polytrons' proven Learning Model of Planning , Transferring, and Confirming for Continual Learning<sup>SM</sup> in their own training classes.

## CONCLUSION

*“If success is gauged by positive change and information gain, then the project was a success!”*

*-- Client Plant Manager*

The client's Plant Manager anticipates that the proven methods of effective knowledge transfer will continue to increase overall communication, information sharing, and knowledge retention strengthening the value of their workforce.



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