

Like A Boss: Training A New Way For Different Results



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Chris Schneider, director of employee development for Ruppert Landscape

Chris Schneider, director of employee development for [Ruppert Landscape](#), headquartered in Laytonsville, Maryland, says that trading in the traditional two-day classroom seminar that the company had always done at their corporate campus, for a one-day workshop at local branch offices, has allowed the company to create a more meaningful training experience for employees. Schneider says they tried this new training tactic this past winter and, because it paired with the right objective, it was a big success.

"We found that with this type of training, branch members were more likely to take on an active role in customizing the content of the class specific to their branch," Schneider says. "The investment of the days' time for all branch management and office staff was quickly validated when ideas started flowing and problems at the branch were being solved."

When training was collectively held at headquarters, problems were spoken about generically and hypothetical situations were raised from the various branches. But by doing a one-day workshop at the individual branches, Schneider says they were able to address real and specific problems in the branch and then talk about real solutions with branch leadership.

"The branch-centered training impacted branch personnel differently – we noticed that team members internalized the training to a greater extent," Schneider says. "The fact that our training team traveled to their locations to address their specific needs was not lost on each group. This approach fostered more of a commitment to the training topics rather than just compliance."

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The workshops began with a short presentation and discussion in which the trainer helped facilitate a branch plan for change. Champions in the branch were appointed to oversee key areas of progress and track milestones.

“Using this new class format during our winter branch visits, our maintenance teams had the opportunity to develop and execute a new process for recruiting,” Schneider says. “Early indications show that the new approach is paying dividends. Ideas are not being lost, but are being transformed into actions and strung together into plans.”



Photo: Ruppert Landscape

Schneider says that with everyone on the same page, plans are better executed. The entire branch is on board and understands the desired outcome.

“Traveling to each branch made a difference not only for the branch members, but also for our corporate employee development team,” he adds. “We were able to see our students in their own element, dealing with their day-to-day issues. We tackled relevant branch-specific issues with a team that was then empowered to make changes.”

Traditional classroom training at the corporate headquarters is still a viable and productive option for training, but going forward, the company plans to integrate more branch-centered training. Schneider equates it to adding another tool to the toolbox that can help meet specific needs.

“We will be traveling to local branches again later this year to focus on developing management skills,” Schneider says. “The curriculum will be based on responses to a survey administered to every branch employee. The survey will identify areas where we need development to support our growth. These responses will be used to gauge how we build better managers, develop more efficient teams and create rewarding experiences for our customers.”

Our [Like a Boss](#) series highlights some common business challenges landscape professionals face and how they conquer them.