

Tonight, *it's an open bar!*

Before I joined Davidson, I'd spent over ten years with a telecomms consultancy group. Unlike most of my former colleagues, I had no cause to complain about either my tasks or my pay. But there was one thing that wound me up and left me so frustrated that I felt the need to go and see if the grass was greener elsewhere. That thing was training. Or, more to the point, the lack of it...

Phase 1: in search of the Holy Grail

Quite simply, training is the Holy Grail. We think it exists ('Well you can always put in a request'), apparently some people have even seen it ('There's a schedule going round somewhere'). But no-one has ever actually touched it ('No, I've never had any'), and it's best not to talk about it as it can bring bad luck: your manager will never risk asking you if you need it, in case you say yes. Training is pretty much a dirty word. But I got by without it, because the advantage of being a consultant is working in and learning from a whole range of different environments.

Phase 2: my life was ticking away

But there came a point when I really did need some training, for PMI certification. In my field, project management, you're increasingly expected to have both experience and a qualification in the PMI method. Fool that I was, I assumed getting it would be a formality.

After all, in seven years I'd asked for nothing, no intercontract work, just certification that would make me and my employer stand out in a competitive market. What could be more straightforward?

At least that's what I thought:

1. my manager ignored my phone messages;

2. so I pinned him down at head office:

'Did you get my messages?'

'Erm, yes, but it's hardly urgent is it?'

'Well it's getting that way.'

'Oh, right, well let's pencil it in for next year...';

3. and the next year: sorry, it completely slipped my mind. You should have reminded me. It'll take a while you know: I'll need to get quotes from a few places to get the best one, you know how they pump up their prices... (Actually no, not in the past year - Ed.);

4. right, I've got two options for you. The best one is e-learning: it's cracking, for 50 euros you get unlimited access to multiple-choice questions and online classes, so you can do it at weekends at your own pace. Or there's a course of 15 evening classes from 7 to 9 pm, starting next January - they're booked up till then. The funny thing is that I found loads of daytime ones





on Google, with good availability. Maybe it's a budget issue?

Anyway, step 5 was me applying for new jobs, and I've been with Davidson ever since. Largely because during the recruitment process I got coherent answers when I asked about the training policy. 'It's an open bar here. We say yes to all requests as long as they're not completely potty, and provided we get some sort of return on our investment.' Less than a year after I joined, I asked my manager if I could do this same qualification.

And here's what happened:

1. he thought it was a great idea, and a win-win outcome too as it would help Davidson big me up to their clients;
2. he gave his approval there and then;
3. a few minutes later he emailed me the details of the training manager who was going to send me the schedule of PMI training;
4. as soon the schedule came through I chose my slot, and confirmation of my registration arrived a few days later.

I'll be qualified in two months. This is the Davidson approach to everything. We trust in everyone's sense of responsibility – obviously the company wouldn't cope with a constant flow of nonsensical, poorly judged requests – and Davidson invests in individuals, who know they are valued. In the last few weeks I've been putting together internal training modules, a suggestion I came up

with as part of the Davidson Management School project.

For me, this is what true return on investment looks like.

Véronique

Feeling inspired?

Managers

Say yes to all training requests (unless they're completely nuts)!

Everyone

Don't try to bankrupt us. Pick training that's useful to you but has some benefit for Davidson too.

Share your knowledge: any Davidsonian can put articles, training and reports on the extranet for all to see. Get used to hitting 'upload' in the document database, or in forums you feel you can contribute to. When you get a spare minute, why not take the time to add or improve training or information materials.

Keep putting your training requests in the relevant section on the Davidson extranet! This helps us focus our efforts on key topics.