

## All you ever needed to know about Time to Train

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Cheryl Clemons looks into the latest government training initiative and how to ensure you are complying.

We know it makes business sense for organisations to provide their employees with the right training and tools to help them perform well in their roles. So, encouraging organisations to make training a priority is, in principle, a good thing.

In April, a new piece of legislation called 'Time to Train' came into force, which gives employees the right to request time off for training.

Of course, for many employers new legislation isn't always perceived as a good thing. More rules can be perceived as simply extra bureaucracy without benefit. In this tradition, 'Time to Train' has had a mixed reception - Miles Templeman, director general of the Institute of Directors, said the new rules were 'unnecessary, poorly thought through and damaging'.

However, for the time being 'Time to Train' is a reality. And, unless it gets repealed by the new coalition government, organisations with employee numbers over 250 will need to ensure they have the right procedures in place. So, why not take it as an opportunity to review and improve what you currently do? Take a proactive approach to complying with the law and, at the same time, do what's right for your people and your organisation.

### What is 'Time to Train'?

'Time to Train' is a new law that affects 11 million UK workers in England, Scotland and Wales. This year organisations with more than 250 employees need to comply. It is anticipated that next year (April 2011) the legislation will also apply to organisations with fewer employees.

### The facts

'Time to Train' came into force on 6 April 2010 and employers (with 250 or more staff) have to "seriously consider" a formal request from employees (with at least 26 weeks' service) for time away from their core duties to undertake training.

1. There's no limit on the length of time that can be requested, but as an employer, you are only required to consider one request within any 12-month period.
2. As an employer you are NOT obliged to pay for the training or to pay for time spent training by the employee.
3. An employee who experiences a breach of regulations can claim compensation of up to a limit of eight weeks' pay, capped at £380 per week.
4. The law provides clear guidelines on the schedule and process for how employers respond to requests. It is essential that employers familiarise themselves with this process.

For more details Business Link has provided a guide and resources, including a flowchart for considering 'Time to Train' requests. For more information and advice to share with employees see here:

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/employment/employees/timeoffandholidays/DG\\_183635](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/employment/employees/timeoffandholidays/DG_183635)

## What do you need to know?

On a positive note, 'Time to Train' gives the training department legal backing with budget holders to ensure training procedures are adequate, up to date and addressing real needs of the current workforce and organisation.

- There are a number of key actions to consider:
- Ensure you have a procedure in place to deal with all requests for time off for training. All requests and responses must be confirmed in writing.
- You will need to communicate the procedure or policy to all line managers and employees to ensure they know what to do and how to comply.
- If you are a manager or line manager ensure all requests for training are fully considered in line with the time scales outlined (see links above).
- As an employer, you can only refuse an employee's request for time to train outright if it is one of the outlined business reasons e.g. training doesn't improve the employee's performance in the organisation, or the burden of additional costs is too great.
- For full list see: [www.fpb.org/page/721/Time\\_to\\_train.htm](http://www.fpb.org/page/721/Time_to_train.htm)
- Ensure your training programmes deal with specific skills and requests from employees that also match the needs of your organisation.
- Regularly review training programmes, ensure they are up to date and still appropriate.

## What solutions are available?

Of course, if you already deal with all training requests and your people development is aligned to organisational objectives, then no major changes are needed. However, the new law presents an opportunity to review how you currently deliver training and support performance organisation-wide.

Perhaps learning can be delivered in a more time-efficient and cost-effective way? Perhaps this is an opportunity to be clearer about what you want to achieve for the organisation and measure the impact of the learning accordingly?

The CIPD Learning and Development 2010 survey identifies that a 'blend' of training methods is the most effective. This can include formal face-to-face training, elearning programmes, virtual online classrooms or coaching. How are you using the following?:

- Try live online training. Outsource or subscribe to a web-based service that covers the key skills needed within your organisation and which offer flexible access for all. For example, LiveTime Learning, an interactive learning channel, which recreates the live training experience online. See [www.livetimelearning.co.uk](http://www.livetimelearning.co.uk)
- Elearning is still rising in effectiveness and popularity with 62% of organisations using elearning more now than in 2009 (CIPD survey). For elearning to be successful it needs to engage the learner and focus on clear business objectives.
- Coaching is personal and on the job and was recently found to be one of the most effective (according to 51% of practitioners) and wide spread (used by 82% of practitioners) learning and development practices (CIPD Learning and Talent Development 2010 Survey). In-house development programmes were also found to be successful.
- Outsource to specialist trainers when specific skills need to be built by a smaller number of the workforce (such as machine handling, or specific technical skills). There are a number of good online resources which can help you find a training partner.

## Responsibility and opportunity

For organisations that already have good training procedures in place the new legislation re-affirms your responsibility and enables you to map the rules against your existing practice.

It is designed to motivate those that aren't providing adequate skills development for individual employees in the context of the organisation's goals. It probably depends on your perspective whether or not you consider the new law a positive move. However, it is also an opportunity to reinforce some key messages, such as ensuring individuals better understand how their development requests can make a direct impact on the business.

'Time to Train', therefore, represents a responsibility and an opportunity for L&D professionals. A responsibility which is shared by employees who will have to submit equally SMART requests to succeed. It's also an opportunity to explore innovative new ways of delivering real business impact through learning and performance support across your organisation.

### Note to editors - About Brightwave

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