

Advertisement

Advertisement



ATD BLOG

# Building Bench Strength in 2023



By Dianna Booher  
Friday, February 24, 2023

Advertisement

0 Bookmark Share

*As I walked into the training center of a large oil company a few years ago, an unfamiliar face greeted me. "Hi, I'm Dale," he said. "I hope somebody has already told*

Selected For You

## Building Bench Strength in 2023

## What to Do When Feedback Feels Abusive

*"Jessie's gone. But he'll be back in 30 days--probably at twice his old salary."*

## Upskilling Your Organization to Increase Engagement and Retention With Instructional Designers

*Dale noticed my puzzled expression and continued to explain: "Friday was his last day ... he left a big gap. Been here 35 years ... he taught most of the executive-level programs."*

*"Hmmm. I didn't know that."*

*"Yep. He walked out with about 50 courses." Dale gestured toward his graying temples. "All up here. In his head. No time to write leader guides. So now that he's gone, we're having to hire him back as a consultant to collect and record all that knowledge."*

Such situations haven't changed all that much. Despite technological advances, blending learning, and ongoing efforts to build content databases across the organization, erosion and loss still happen.

So, you've heard it before—the mandate to build bench strength on your team.

The update: we've moved to the red-alert stage!

**Advertisement** Baby Boomers continue to leave the workforce in droves, and that exit will last until 2030. Routine retirements take 1.3 million Americans (age 64 and older) out of the workforce each year, and another 630,000 are left in 2022 because of *early* retirement.

And those who don't retire don't plan to quit any time soon. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), roughly one-third of all workers changed jobs in 2022. The situation may be more critical this year. According to a survey cited in *Fortune* (December 21, 2022), nearly half of the workers plan to find a new job in 2023.

## Selected For You

## Building Bench Strength in 2023

Of course, you already have long-term strategies for building bench strength five or 10 years out—increased diversity, benefits to appeal to the five generations in the workforce, and skills-based recruitment efforts versus experience-based recruitment. (You do have those plans in place, right? Of course, you do; you're at the top of your game!)

So, strategies aside, the following ideas should help with the immediate day-to-day tactical headaches of unexpected resignations and operational glitches that result:

- Formalize mentoring programs, linking executives with younger high-potentials for bi-directional help.** Current articles talk of "self-coaching," but not all workers fall into the self-starter category. Just as Broadway directors hire understudies for their performances, ensure your mentoring programs include discussions critical to the organization and those topics beneficial to the mentee. Also, communicate to those in the mentoring program that mentoring sessions should be bi-directional. For example, junior employees with less leadership experience might be tapped to mentor senior executives on technical issues.
- Document processes and do periodic audits to update** changes in a process. These processes should be captured online so that updating happens easily and quickly. In a hybrid workplace where employees come and go unexpectedly, those remaining staffers "picking up the slack" must be able to carry on with minimal training/information AND without undue stress as they finish interrupted projects.
- Build and distribute resource directories,** arranged by specialty, of approved AND potential new suppliers (independent consultants, contractors, and temp organizations). Department heads or project leads should be able to access these resources immediately to outsource a project or assignment when a worker leaves.
- Give more than lip service to employee well-being** if you expect to retain workers. Leadership models must change to embrace listening, coaching, feedback,

## Selected For You

## Building Bench Strength in 2023

### What to Do When Feedback Feels Abusive

- **Modify your CRM system with a SAAD template** for every worker to use when

Upskilling recording client interactions—especially as you embrace hybrid work and job-

sharing arrangements. When employees physically “walk the halls,” many details are shared in pass-by interactions or at the water cooler. But with people working from home, they must depend on details entered into your CRM. Make those details complete, clear, and easy to skim.

**S = Summary.** Create a one-or-two-sentence overview of the client or coworker interaction or situation

**A = Action Taken.** State what you’ve done to correct a problem or move a project forward.

**A = Action Pending.** List the next steps that either you or another person plans to take based on the summary.

**D = Details.** Add pertinent details to help someone understand what has been done or must be done to follow up on the situation (in case the writer of SAAD gets hit by the proverbial bus).

Making clear, concise notes to increase personal productivity companywide (saving both writing and reading time) is NOT a tactical task that should be turned over to ChatGPT!

- **Prioritize and then offer your efforts to department heads needing help with tactical tasks they dread or don’t do well.** This includes meeting facilitation, hiring interviews, and mapping processes to reduce steps. These tasks increase the manager’s stress level, leading to burnout. Consider these “going-the-extra-mile” HR efforts to improve employee development and retention.
- **Identify what your staff can stop doing temporarily** to lighten the load in the HR

### Selected For You

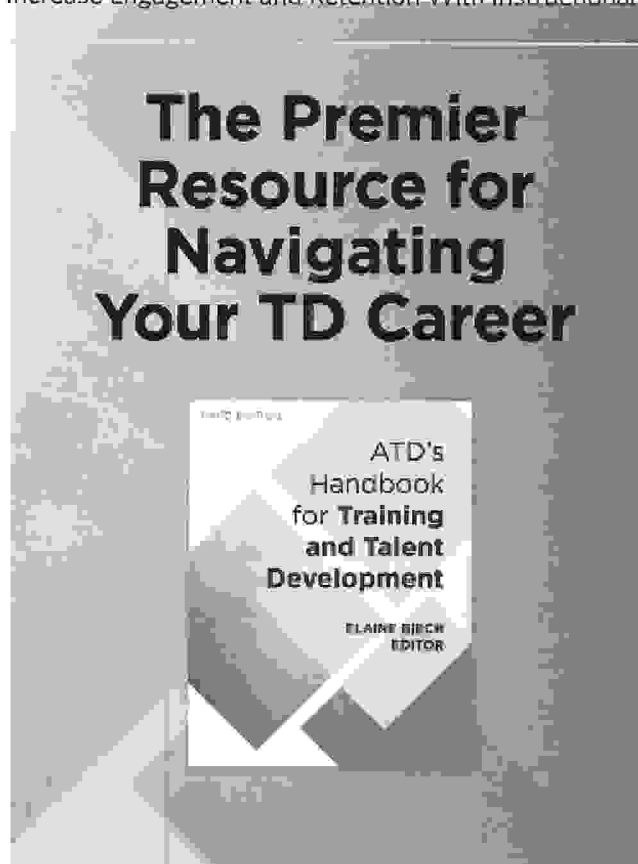
2/25/23, 6:59 PM

Building Bench Strength in 2023

Building Bench Strength in 2023

Handbook  
What Feedback Feels Abusive

Upskilling Your Organization to Increase Engagement and Retention With Instructional Designers



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Dianna Booher**

Dianna Booher is author of *Faster, Fewer, Better Emails* and *Communicate Like a Leader*.

**Be the first to comment**

Building Bench Strength in 2023

What to Do When Feedback Feels Abusive

Upskilling Your Organization to Increase Engagement and Retention With Instructional Designers



ATD BLOG

# What to Do When Feedback Feels Abusive

BM

By Brittney Maxfield  
Friday, February 24, 2023

Advertisement

0



Bookmark

Share

Selected For You



## Building Bench Strength in 2023

What did or didn't do isn't acceptable. How do we make this uncomfortable feedback easier to give and receive?

Upskilling Your Organization to Increase Engagement and Retention With Instructional Designers

Several years ago, Crucial Learning did a study about how people respond to feedback—especially harsh criticism. We received stories from 455 people who had been told things like:

- “Think about leaving. I need warriors not wimps.”
- “You know—you are kind of whiny.”
- “You look great on a resume but not so great on the job.”

Some may see these statements as examples of bullying. And yet, while 90 percent said they felt shocked or stunned to receive such feedback, only 15 percent reacted with feelings of anger or resentment. The most common responses were either silence or forced politeness.

But we didn't stop there. We wondered whether people would welcome feedback if it were delivered in a more careful and compassionate way. If someone said, “You seem to be more concerned with your own results than the results of the team” rather than “You are selfish,” would the recipient be grateful and more accepting?

What we found is that no matter how well the feedback was delivered, it still left a painful and lasting impression. It was still hard to hear.

There is no room for bullying in the workplace—or any place for that matter. But just because feedback can sting, doesn't mean it's a form of bullying. Any time we hold another accountable, no matter how we do it, they are likely to bristle to some degree. And while we teach how to speak with candor and respect, it's also important to develop skills for receiving feedback or being the recipient of what we at Crucial Learning call a crucial conversation.

Selected For You

## Building Bench Strength in 2023

**Safety is one of two essential psychological needs.** Whenever we believe it's threatened, our brains react by choosing fight, flight, or freeze. When someone is holding us accountable, we are completely safe. It's our pride that's at risk, not our safety.

In the case of physical danger, we take responsibility for our safety. And yet, when it comes to psychological safety, we often assume others are responsible for it. If this is our position, the default reaction to feedback is to take offense. Instead, remember Ghandi's guidance: "Nobody can hurt me without my permission."

Ultimately, the motives of others is irrelevant. Even if someone delivers feedback in an unfeeling or overly harsh manner, you can still take responsibility for your psychological safety.

## Own Your Worth

Our other essential psychological need is a sense of self-worth. Too often we derive our worth from external sources—jobs, salary, social standing, or material possessions. When someone reveals our shortcomings through uncomfortable feedback, externally-based self-worth crumbles.

Instead, develop a sense of self-worth based on self-respect. One way to improve self-respect is to develop values and live by them. If you live by a set of mores, your sense of self-worth is untouched by uncomfortable feedback.

Holding people accountable is challenging; it's the act of conveying something they may not want to hear. No matter how kindly it's done, it may hurt.

Instead of demanding perfection from the messenger, let's take more responsibility as receivers. Encourage employees to be open to hearing hard truths, even when they aren't perfectly packaged.

## Selected For You