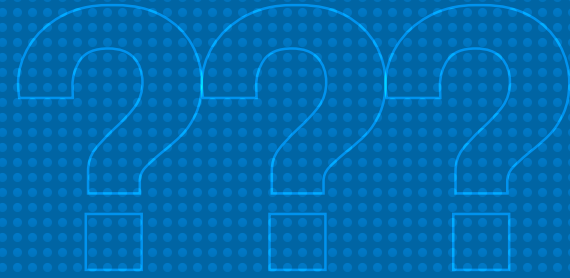# LOOKING FOR IT TRAINING?

7 QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CONSIDERING A NEW IT TRAINING PROVIDER

How to Select an IT Training Vendor

Answer These Questions to Streamline the Evaluation Process and Make Smart Decisions.

☑ What are our needs? Spend dedicated time drafting staff training requirements as they relate to the success of the team and the organization.

☑ Where is the organization strategically headed, and what initiatives will require IT firepower and talent to support this direction?

☑ What are my team's current skill sets and skill gaps as they relate to current projects and future initiatives?

☑ What does my IT leadership pipeline look like - do I need a succession plan?

☑ What project deadlines lie ahead? Are there other timelines we need to be aware of?

Once you've identified your requirements, ask your vendors the key questions on the following pages.

Q1 How up-to-date is the training? When was the most recent refresh published?

Technology moves quickly; a vendor's curriculum may not! It's important that training content reflects challenges that IT workforces are experiencing both today and in the future.

Outdated material results in frustration – a waste of time, energy, and money – and it results in ineffective learning tools for course attendees. Time spent in training must be meaningful and beneficial – to the individual and to the organization.

Q2 Who is teaching the class? What are their credentials and do the instructors communicate clearly and effectively?

The caliber of your course instructor matters! This encompasses all aspects of instruction: real-world and teaching experience, publishing accomplishments, and the ability to articulate lessons enthusiastically in clear terms. When students invest 20-30 hours in a class (especially a virtual one) the experience should be nothing short of stellar.

Avoid vendors that work with "contract" instructors (per diem) - you may not know what you are getting!

Q3 Are instructors available for Q&A outside of class?

Relating lessons to workplace scenarios is important. Sometimes these questions can be discussed "in class"; other times a discussion outside of class is helpful. What about questions concerning certification exam test taking tactics, etc. Check to see if instructors are available,with regular scheduled office hours, for questions.

Q4 Is certification exam prep important?

Often organizations need the assurance of "certified" status for employees working on mission critical business systems and applications, while others are comfortable with staff knowledge levels suitable for performance in the "real-world".

If certification is essential, seek vendors that demonstrate high certification pass rates and deliver models where learning is not a one-time event and are tuned-in to the process of learning and preparing for certification exams – examples include instructor Q&A, opportunities for review and remedial help, as well as access to practice exam and exam study guide resources.

Q5 Is a boot camp-style class presentation what I need?

Yes: If training is time sensitive relative to initiatives and projects, or if you think a condensed, focused educational experience will provide a superior learning experience.

No: If Boot Camp-style is in conflict with learning styles (lot's of information in a short timeframe) or if the organization cannot afford to have staff away from work for consecutive days while training.

Depending on your IT training needs and deadlines, choose between Boot Camp-style condensed training or an individual, flexible go-at-your-own-pace approach.

Q6 Are training administration, completion analytics, and metrics important?

Departments with sizeable training budgets and large IT teams are often under pressure to accurately administer training, track training completions, and measure the impact training has on job and organization performance results.

Choose a vendor who will have a system in place to work closely with your administrators to plan training assignments, track completion due dates, account for completions, provide training experience feedback, etc. Confirm that vendor reports are delivered in CSV or other formats where data can be manipulated and archived.

Q7 Does the vendor treat clients as a long-term partner or as an opportunity to put a "butt in a seat?"

This is an important question to ask, and a difficult answer to get. Training may or may not be a priority for administrators as they often have other duties - that's why a competent, experienced vendor with a history of account management and support is a huge value.