

## Are your employees sabotaging new technology?

**A guide for helping staff embrace, not forsake, technological change**



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Funny? Yes...unless that happens to be one of your employees!

New technological initiatives are one of the most important ways for construction and design companies to renew themselves and compete in today’s fast-paced markets. However, many of these investments simply don’t live up to the great expectations that we have for them. There could be many reasons for this, but here we’ll address the widespread problem of employee misuse and sabotage.

Am I suggesting that your staff would actually blow up their hard drives... or shred their new software? Not at all. But, like it or not, your employee—the end user of your new technology—could be the person who stands between the success or failure of a major company investment.

You’ve probably seen it happen before. Top management makes the thoughtful and painstaking decision to purchase a new technology product that shows genuine promise for the company. Unfortunately, the transition process or complete integration of the new technology comes to a screeching halt because the end user/users cannot or will not adapt to



the changes that result. Generally, there are three reasons why this will happen.

**The employee fights the learning process.** You may have the brightest, most competent staff member on board, but if a person is too set in their ways, and uncomfortable with change of any kind, than you may have better luck turning water into wine than relying on this individual to enthusiastically embrace your new technology. The best way to avoid bad attitudes is to include employees in the decision-making process. According to adult learning theory, adults will commit to learning when

the goals and objectives are considered realistic and important to them. A person who understands how the new technology will benefit the company overall, and relates to his/her day-to-day activities, will be less resistant to change.

**The employee lacks specific skills.** It’s unfair to ask an employee with no skills or training in a specific area to tackle new technology that builds upon those skills. For example, your company currently employs several high school grads to perform basic bookkeeping tasks using a generic software package. Your decision to upgrade to a construction-specific

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accounting system would be better utilized by an employee with accounting experience. The user needs to understand not just the individual tasks to be performed, but how the system can be used to manage and analyze all financial data. Likewise, the end user of a powerful new estimating software package should be person within the company who has a background in job cost estimating.

**The employee has not been given adequate training.** Clearly, this is not the fault of the employee, and it is probably the major cause of painful, chaotic transitions when introducing new technology. The good news is that it is entirely within your control to give your staff what they need, namely, proper training, support...and time.

What do I mean by proper training? Let me answer that question with a question. Did you know that adults have a much shorter attention span and a lower ability to learn new concepts than our school-age children? Our hectic, multi-tasking work environment has robbed us of the ability to focus and learn more than one or two concepts at a time. So forget about throwing your employees into an all-day seminar and expecting them to master their new software or system. Instead, spread out the training as much as you can, and include lots of hands-on practical exercises. The time spent in upfront training is well worth the investment and could prevent costly downtime in the future.

Of course, product training and support should be among your greatest concerns when selecting new technology. Ask for client referrals and talk to the end users regarding how they were trained and the availability of "live" support people. If your employee is paralyzed with a new technology problem and spends the entire day on hold with a computer-voice messaging "help

desk," I'd say productivity has definitely suffered, not improved, with your new product.

To summarize, the best ways to have your employees embrace new

technology initiatives are to 1) include the end-users in the decision making process; 2) make sure that you have hired the best people (meaning aptitude *and* attitude) to

handle the daily operations, and 3) provide employees with comprehensive training and support as well as a reasonable timetable for making major changes. **BXM**

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THE DARDEN COMPANY  
*general contractor / construction management*  
[www.thedardencompany.com](http://www.thedardencompany.com)

5055 Corbin Drive  
Cleveland, OH 44128  
P • 216.475.2020  
F • 216.475.9040

The advertisement features a large blue and white logo for 'DARDEN' at the top. Below it, the company name 'THE DARDEN COMPANY' is written in blue, followed by 'general contractor / construction management' in a smaller, italicized blue font. The website 'www.thedardencompany.com' is listed in blue. To the right, the address '5055 Corbin Drive, Cleveland, OH 44128' and phone/fax numbers 'P • 216.475.2020' and 'F • 216.475.9040' are provided. The bottom half of the ad is dominated by a large image of a modern brick building with a prominent 'DARDEN' sign above the entrance. Two circular inset images show other views of the building's exterior.