



project brief

Client:	American Bakers Association
Campaign:	ABA Front Line Leaders
Job Number:	ABAFLL16-0006
Job Name:	Testimonials

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Performed telephone interviews to garner key information from attendees of the November 2016 program of Leadership Development for Front Line Professionals. Questions were formulated with the objective of eliciting information that would provide a clear understanding of each attendee's reasons for attending, key takeaways and value received. The objective was to determine their overall perception of the program, what would motivate them to participate and any objections they had. Ideally, the information gathered will be useful for future program planning, marketing efforts and messaging strategy.

METHODOLOGY

Program attendees received an email inviting them to share their thoughts on the program. Information was then captured through telephone interviews conducted by key team members. The respondent pool was taken from the attendee list. Questions were open-ended, as this approach typically elicits answers that are more candid, in-depth, varied in scope and, often, more enlightening than yes or no questions. We have provided verbatim responses to the qualitative research and a summary of overall findings and recommendations based on information captured.

QUESTIONS

1. How did you hear about this program?
2. Who made the decision for you to attend? What made you/the decision maker decide to attend/send you to Leadership Development for Front Line Professional?
3. Can you tell me any key takeaways from the program? Do you feel like you can apply those to your job right away?
4. What is the biggest challenge that you face in your job? How did this program help address that challenge?
5. Did you find it more beneficial that this program was geared to the baking industry? Why or why not?

6. Would you recommend this program to an industry colleague? What would you tell them the biggest benefit to attending?

OVERARCHING PERCEPTIONS/COMMENTS

Of the 20 attendees who received an email to participate in a follow-up phone interview, 7 agreed to be interviewed.

- Across the board, the program continues to be extremely well received. Unlike the last session, all the people interviewed were front line leaders who had been asked to attend the session by the upper management. The attendees were seen as “up and comers” in the company, and management at those companies saw a value in making sure their front line leaders were well-trained in leadership and management skills.
- The interviewees continue to be unanimous in the value of the program, its real-life applicability and the immediate impact the lessons from the program would have on their leadership skills at their facility. Attendees appreciated the personalized aspect of the program; the fact that the course was designed for baking professionals and was taught by instructors who could apply relatable experiences to the case studies.
- Role-playing was seen as the single most valuable training method of the program, allowing each attendee to understand first-hand how to use the communication skills that had been taught and how to apply the tools to better manage common challenging situations.
- Attendees responded that learning new ways to communicate with employees and management was the primary benefit of attending the program. Generally speaking, the greatest challenge each of the front line leaders dealt with, were the difficult and actively disengaged employees. Learning new methods of managing these employees was eye opening for the attendees and many felt they would become immediately more effective leaders having learned new communication techniques such as spiraling and root cause analysis.

RESPONSES BY PERSON

1. Production Supervisor, Large Baking Company

How did you hear about this program?

My company contacted me through the VP of Personnel and he encouraged me to go.

Who made the decision for you to attend? What made you/the decision maker decide to attend/send you to Leadership Development for Front Line Professional?

The VP asked my plant manager and regional VP if I could attend and they said yes. My company thinks training is very important and they are always promoting leadership and technical skills. This program was very good for developing leadership skills.

Can you tell me any key takeaways from the program? Do you feel like you can apply those to your job right away?

The program was very statistics based. I really like that because I really like numbers. For instance, we learned that every time you reprimand someone you should then follow up with four positive things. We learned about spiraling techniques for communication. That was a big learning point for me. We focused on root cause analysis, and how to get to the root cause of a bad day. But then we also talked about using root cause analysis on a good day, as to the real causes of what makes up a good day. I absolutely can use these takeaways in my job right away. There was nothing there that was too complex where you didn't feel like you could start that today. The program was really geared towards front line leaders - I think 17 out of the 18 people there were front line leaders.

What is the biggest challenge that you face in your job? How did this program help address that challenge?

Getting every single person to buy into one goal, to create safe quality products. For instance, we learned that 19% of the workforce are actively disengaged and we focused on how to bring them up to be at least fence sitters. But then 55% of the workforce are already fence sitters, so if you spend more time trying to get them engaged you can move them into the actively engaged category and then the actively disengaged will follow. It helped me understand I need to shift my focus away from the actively disengaged and more to the fence sitters.

Did you find it more beneficial that this program was geared to the baking industry? Why or why not?

Having the program targeted to bakers kept us more engaged. I have been to other leadership trainings, which I like since there are different groups and industries there and you can learn lessons from them, but with a group made up only of bakers it seemed like all the lessons were applicable to us. Sometimes with other industries you think, "We can't do that," but that wasn't the case here since we were all bakers.

Would you recommend this program to an industry colleague? What would you tell them the biggest benefit to attending?

Yes I would recommend this program to a colleague, especially for the newer supervisors. In the program they go over experiences and you practice them by role-playing. We had one role-play with a union rep, a supervisor and an employee and we played out a scenario that was really helpful. The people were really great with the roleplaying. I could tell a lot of the attendees had not been in their supervisor role for very long and it was helpful to them to see actual examples of techniques on how more experienced supervisors handled scenarios.

I kept thinking to myself that this program needed no changes. It was really well run and organized. The instructors were well educated and well spoken. Everything flowed and the food was great. It's a great tool for the baking industry.

2. Production Supervisor, Large Baking Company

How did you hear about this program?

I heard about it from my regional VP. He was looking for a couple of high potential front line leaders he was going to send to the class and he nominated me for it. It was a big honor.

Who made the decision for you to attend? What made you/the decision maker decide to attend/ send you to Leadership Development for Front Line Professional?

Our company is trying to build up the next generation of leaders who will eventually lead the company. I was invited along with a couple of others from my company, as they see us moving higher in the company in the near to mid future.

Can you tell me any key takeaways from the program? Do you feel like you can apply those to your job right away?

For me personally because I have been doing this for a little over 13 years, the number one takeaway was learning communication techniques I wasn't aware of before. The communications part was very valuable to me. The number one technique I recall is the spiraling technique. That is valuable for front line leaders because we tend to want things to go our way and we need to get more buy-in from our associates. We have to include them more in decision-making processes and spiraling and other communication techniques will help with that.

What is the biggest challenge that you face in your job? How did this program help address that challenge?

Dealing with the actively disengaged. There are always a few and they are challenging, especially when you work in a company that hasn't dealt with them properly in the past. That's changing now and we are getting better. I think this is a problem with the baking industry as a whole. Since the company is a union shop, the company doesn't have a lot of options to work with actively disengaged employees or even actively attempt to get them to leave. Follow through and consistency is a struggle in the industry. This class covered consistency, fairness and giving people a chance to turn into valuable employees before taking other steps. I think the class could focus more on that. Across the board, that is a major challenge.

Did you find it more beneficial that this program was geared to the baking industry? Why or why not?

Yes I found it more beneficial that the program was geared to our industry, and wasn't for retail or sales, but for manufacturing and baking. All the scenarios really matched my background. Talking to the others there and sharing experiences was valuable.

Would you recommend this program to an industry colleague? What would you tell them the biggest benefit to attending?

I would absolutely recommend this program! I made a recommendation to my regional VP to send more people. This class is especially valuable to fairly new front line leaders that come from the lower ranks who have worked their way up. One of the struggles new leaders have is they never get the

chance to try out leadership techniques before being thrown in and we end up learning by trial and error. This is a valuable program for new front line leaders to be exposed to leadership skills in a safe environment so they can understand what they are supposed to do without getting themselves in trouble. The biggest benefit is that a colleague will get a lot of valuable tools they can apply with relative ease in their daily job and it sets them up for success. They learn the first steps on how to be an effective leader. If they were to go to the class at the beginning of their career, it would give them a good place to start being a leader and not start with bad habits and bad methods of leadership.

I really liked the class and only have one suggestion that we should do more role-playing, and give everyone a chance to act as the manager. There should be more opportunities to give everyone a shot at being the leader.

3. Packaging Supervisor, Mid-Sized Baking Company

How did you hear about this program?

My plant manager brought it up to me and asked me if I wanted to go and I did. I wanted to go to further my skills as a supervisor and learn new methods of management.

Who made the decision for you to attend? What made you/the decision maker decide to attend/ send you to Leadership Development for Front Line Professional?

The plant manager decided. I had just taken a supervisor position. I had been a lead for two years and then they decided to promote me to a supervisor. So I wanted to further my education.

Can you tell me any key takeaways from the program? Do you feel like you can apply those to your job right away?

We learned about root causes and the 5 whys which is going to help me figure out issues at work. For instance, we keep having the same issues with certain machinery breaking down and now I can use root cause to figure out why it keeps happening.

What is the biggest challenge that you face in your job? How did this program help address that challenge?

Communication is the biggest challenge, from upper management to lower management and vice versa. We don't do enough supervisor meetings and plant meetings at my company to keep everyone informed on everything. When a supervisor learns something from up above it would be nice if there was a process to get that information to everybody. If we had better meetings we could have better communication. I learned some different processes we could come up to put more meetings together. I also learned different processes from the other supervisors in the class, processes like center lining, which will be helpful to me as well.

Did you find it more beneficial that this program was geared to the baking industry? Why or why not?

Yes I really liked that everybody came from the same background so the processes we were talking about were more geared to bakeries. I was able to hear about other experiences from other supervisors in baking.

Would you recommend this program to an industry colleague? What would you tell them the biggest benefit to attending?

Yes I would recommend it, mainly because you'll learn better ways to deal with disgruntled employees. Some of our leads are now moving to supervisor positions, and this program is a place where they can learn how to do something new that they haven't had to do before.

I thought it was excellent. I can't think of anything to change. I think my company will definitely send some more people in the future. We had people at both the first and the second class and I can guarantee they'll send some to the third class as well.

4. Line Supervisor, Mid-Sized Baking Company

How did you hear about this program?

My production manager told me about it.

Who made the decision for you to attend? What made you/the decision maker decide to attend/ send you to Leadership Development for Front Line Professional?

The plant manager made the decision. I am about to be promoted from line lead to a supervisor. He wanted to give me the opportunity to get more training and experience.

Can you tell me any key takeaways from the program? Do you feel like you can apply those to your job right away?

There was so much information. The way we did the role-plays, practicing problems, problem solving and communications were all great. Handling difficult problems with employees was one example of what I learned. For instance, if I have an employee who is not following procedures we learned we have to sit with the employee and talk to him and figure out a way to work together to solve the problem. I learned to be a good listener first then figure out the problem to resolve with him.

What is the biggest challenge that you face in your job? How did this program help address that challenge?

Making time for meetings. Bakers are so busy, it's hard to find a good time to call a meeting and share ideas. We talked a lot about this. I got a lot from the experience of the other people in the class. We listened to each other, the problems they had and how they resolve them. We learned to choose the best time to meet. It might be at the beginning of the shift before everyone gets too tired.

Did you find it more beneficial that this program was geared to the baking industry? Why or why not?

Yes, it was helpful that all the people came from baking plants.

Would you recommend this program to an industry colleague? What would you tell them the biggest benefit to attending?

Yes, it's a good opportunity to get more experience and to learn different ideas. The program has a lot of information. For me, the best thing I learned was about communication skills and how to better communicate.

My only suggestion is that there is so much information it's hard to fit it all in to 2 ½ days. I think it should be longer – maybe even 4 or 5 days.

5. Plant Manager, Mid-Sized Baking Company

How did you hear about this program?

The company I work with sent me.

Who made the decision for you to attend? What made you/the decision maker decide to attend/ send you to Leadership Development for Front Line Professional?

The HR Director and the Director of Manufacturing decided to send me. They wanted to get people better leadership training. I am in the second shift and I have been in the company a lot longer, so I think they felt it was my time to go to one of these types of training.

Can you tell me any key takeaways from the program? Do you feel like you can apply those to your job right away?

Better communication is so important. Learning how to better communicate with the employees, and the managers and supervisors as well. I thought the role-playing was great. We learned to have good work you need a good team leader and with that you can't fail.

What is the biggest challenge that you face in your job? How did this program help address that challenge?

The new people in our company are my biggest challenge. We have a lot of temps and a lot of new people and when you bring in more than five at a time it seems challenging for the company. They all need training and we also have to make sure that all the seasoned employees people keep an eye on the new people and help them out. The role-playing helped us work out some of those things.

Did you find it more beneficial that this program was geared to the baking industry? Why or why not?

It wasn't exactly beneficial because it really could have been the same with any food industry. It covers a lot of the same things.

Would you recommend this program to an industry colleague? What would you tell them the biggest benefit to attending?

Attending will prepare you to be a better leader, manager, supervisor and communicator. This program can help you be successful and it will help you not to fail. Our trainer was very good and nice. It was a good program.

6. New Employee, Line Employee, Mid-Sized Baking Company

How did you hear about this program?

Our plant manager was supposed to go but couldn't so then they sent me.

Who made the decision for you to attend? What made you/the decision maker decide to attend/ send you to Leadership Development for Front Line Professional?

The plant manager made the decision. I think they thought it would be a good idea for me to attend and beneficial for me. I am not currently in a leadership position but I think in the future I may be.

Can you tell me any key takeaways from the program? Do you feel like you can apply those to your job right away?

The program helped me be better and more effective with communication. I learned more about being respectful and treating employees in a respectful manner, and learning about being able to be open so they can talk to you if they need help. I learned how to be there for them but also direct them as well.

What is the biggest challenge that you face in your job? How did this program help address that challenge?

I find communicating with employees about issues challenging. Trying to let them know what they are doing wrong, they are not always happy to receive that feedback. I learned how to better communicate with them. We did role-play scenarios that helped me realize what I could be doing differently, and how I could more effectively talk to someone.

Did you find it more beneficial that this program was geared to the baking industry? Why or why not?

Yes, people in the baking industry start at a lower job and then move up and they don't always get formal education on how to be a manager and so this program helps people gain that type of experience.

Would you recommend this program to an industry colleague? What would you tell them the biggest benefit to attending?

I think the program helps you be more effective as a manager, understanding what to do in certain situations and how to handle things better. It will teach you exactly what you should be saying in different situations. I really enjoyed the class and thought it was beneficial.

7. Bun Production Supervisor, Large Baking Company

How did you hear about this program?

I was given the invitation to attend by a VP and he emailed my plant manager and asked him to invite me.

Who made the decision for you to attend? What made you/the decision maker decide to attend/ send you to Leadership Development for Front Line Professional?

They sent me because I just finished the AIB residency course and they wanted to continue my professional development.

Can you tell me any key takeaways from the program? Do you feel like you can apply those to your job right away?

Everything on communications like talking to associates about rewards and coaching were really helpful. The program gives you a set outline on how the conversation should go. I can use those. The focus on problem solving and root cause helped me understand the process. I have done the 5 Whys before, but never had it broken down and I didn't really fully understand the process until now.

What is the biggest challenge that you face in your job? How did this program help address that challenge?

Managing people, especially difficult associates, is my biggest challenge. Also, trying to figure out the things in the process that can affect the quality of the product. I learned that in dealing with difficult people you can use the parking lot technique so that when you are addressing an issue and they go off on a tangent you can set that issue aside and let them know you will get back to it and then you will address it after you talk about the real issue.

Did you find it more beneficial that this program was geared to the baking industry? Why or why not?

Sometimes training programs are so vague they don't dial down to the real tactics. I worked at a snack food bakery at one point in my career and they have totally different processes and a totally different environment. So to have nothing but bakers there and be able to feed off of what they have done that works, to be able to network and see we share the exact same issues, that really adds to the level of training we got.

Would you recommend this program to an industry colleague? What would you tell them the biggest benefit to attending?

You will come away with tools that allow you to communicate effectively with people and understand things like how difficult associates destroy your processes. People don't think difficult employees have a lot of power over the processes but they do.