

# GETTING THE BEST OUT OF TRAINING

In Luxembourg, 71% of companies offer some sort of training to their employees—more than ever before. It costs money; it takes time; but is it worth it? And how do you ensure both parties get what they need out of it?

I have received training twice during my seven years working here,” says Gérard. “Once when we got new software and once when I was promoted, to help me adapt to my new position.” He works in a small company, thus falling into the category of employees who receive little continuous professional training. Only 61% of companies with 10-19 employees in Luxembourg offer ongoing training, while all companies of more than 250 employees do, according to the most recent Statec study on the subject.

“Every year, we are sent to mandatory workshops,” says Anne, who works at one of the Big Four. “Sometimes it’s interesting, sometimes it’s a complete waste of time. We can also request specific training. Last year, I asked for English lessons to improve my small talk skills, which actually helped a lot when dealing with clients.”

In Luxembourg, ongoing professional training represents 1.8% of companies’ total payroll. In the past ten years, the number of employers offering training has risen constantly and more people are benefitting from it, especially those who work in the finance and service sector. “When I started work after college in the eighties, it was very unlikely the employer would offer external training or send its teams on seminars,” says Phil Taylor of WSI Internet Marketing, which provides specialised courses. “As for the approval process for obtaining training, it was much more complicated. Today, employers tend to value both training and their employees more.”

“I’d like to think that rather than make a good person redundant when his or



## MAKE IT COUNT

**A.** Catharina Biver: trainers need to stretch employees  
**B.** Phil Taylor: people need to know why they’re there

her skills are no longer needed, more and more companies decide to spend money to train or retrain employees and give them a new or better skill set,” says John Frank of Tower Training and Consulting. “Training is an effective morale booster, it keeps employees motivated and has been shown to reduce the level of employee turnover.”

## WILL THEY LEAVE?

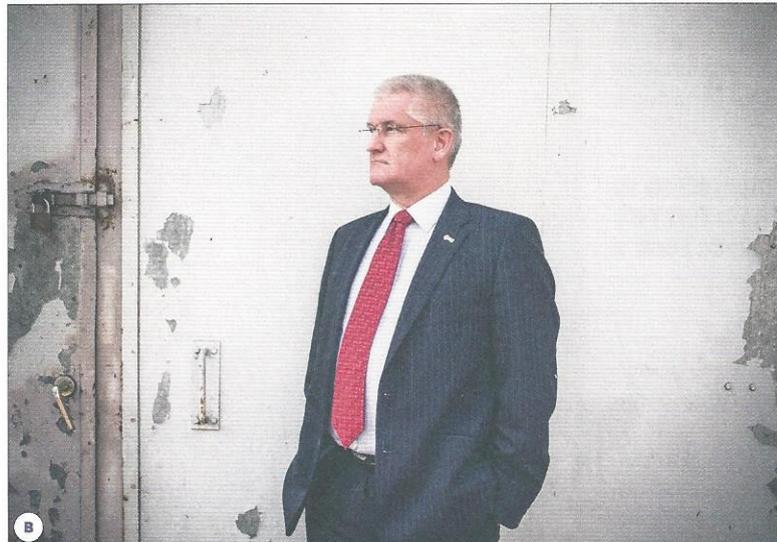
It is also a fact however that some get motivated to the point of leaving their employer once they’ve received training, in search of greener pastures. “I once

had an eight-hour ‘writing for engineers’ class,” recounts Karin. “It made me realise I was tired of being an engineer and that I’d rather be like the woman giving the class, dealing with words instead of numbers. She’s the reason I became a freelance technical writer.”

For Luke, a former sales manager in a pharmaceutical company, training also resulted in a career change. “My boss sent me to a seminar to acquire a better insight in homeopathic remedies. I got so much into it, that I eventually left the company to work in that sector instead.”



Though these examples don't represent the majority of cases, David Holland of Results Rules OK, a training consultancy, agrees that it is a classic fear among employers: "Many think: 'What if I train my staff and they leave?' In reality they should be thinking: 'What if I don't train them and they stay?'" Holland sees several reasons for an increasing number of employers arranging training for their teams. "First of all, there are the expectations of the employees. The trend in academic inflation and increasingly transient career paths



means continued development is demanded by employees and seen as a key part of the remuneration package. The quality of the training in this regard is of importance too. There is also the market needs. In a fast paced economy with both technology and innovation creating new opportunities and challenges for companies, they have no choice but to keep their people at the forefront of knowledge and skill in the workplace. Client expectations and regulatory framework are important too. Clients are increasingly cautious about who they contract with. A solid programme of development and training is a USP that gives confidence to clients."

"Our business is growing and we needed to develop our people at the same rate," says Chris Purdy of Greenfield Recruitment, which has tapped outside trainers like Holland's firm. "Training enables us to keep ahead of the competition."

#### LIFELONG LEARNING

"Companies want to be at the top of their game so they need employees that are too," concurs Catharina Biver at Sparx Factory. "More and more realise that they need to support both

technical skills and soft skills. Before, soft skill training was used if there was a specific need or someone was struggling. Today, it's less a question of fixing problems than of giving employees a platform and allowing them to grow. Most people want professional development; and satisfied and content employees don't usually leave."

Companies in Luxembourg can receive co-funding for their training programmes, just as employees have the right to ask for support for continuing employment-related training (including special paid leaves and organisation of working time). In this respect, the "lifelong learning" portal is a central point of reference, not only for getting information but also for guidance and help finding the right course. The fact that your employer is not offering you professional training should in no way stop you from seeking it.

For training to be a worthwhile investment though, it must be chosen wisely. If you have ever sat through hour-long power-point presentations, listening to someone read slide after slide about a topic heard many times before, you already know this. "It's no good if training is just a lecture and >



#### MORE RESOURCES

**Chamber of  
Employers courses**  
[llc.lu](http://llc.lu)

**Government  
support  
programmes**  
[guichet.public.lu](http://guichet.public.lu)

**Institute of Bank  
Training**  
[ifbl.lu](http://ifbl.lu)

**Luxembourg  
School for  
Commerce  
(vocational  
training)**  
[lsc.lu](http://lsc.lu)

**Results Rules OK**  
[resultsrulesok.com](http://resultsrulesok.com)

**Sparx Factory**  
[sparxfactory.com](http://sparxfactory.com)

**Tower Training  
& Consulting**  
[ttc.lu](http://ttc.lu)

**WSI**  
[wsiluxembourg.com](http://wsiluxembourg.com)

people don't know why they are there," argues Taylor. "Companies must be specific when sending their employees to a course. There must be a logic behind it, a goal."

**"THE GOAL OF TRAINING IS TO PROVIDE NEW AND BETTER WAYS OF WORKING EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY"**

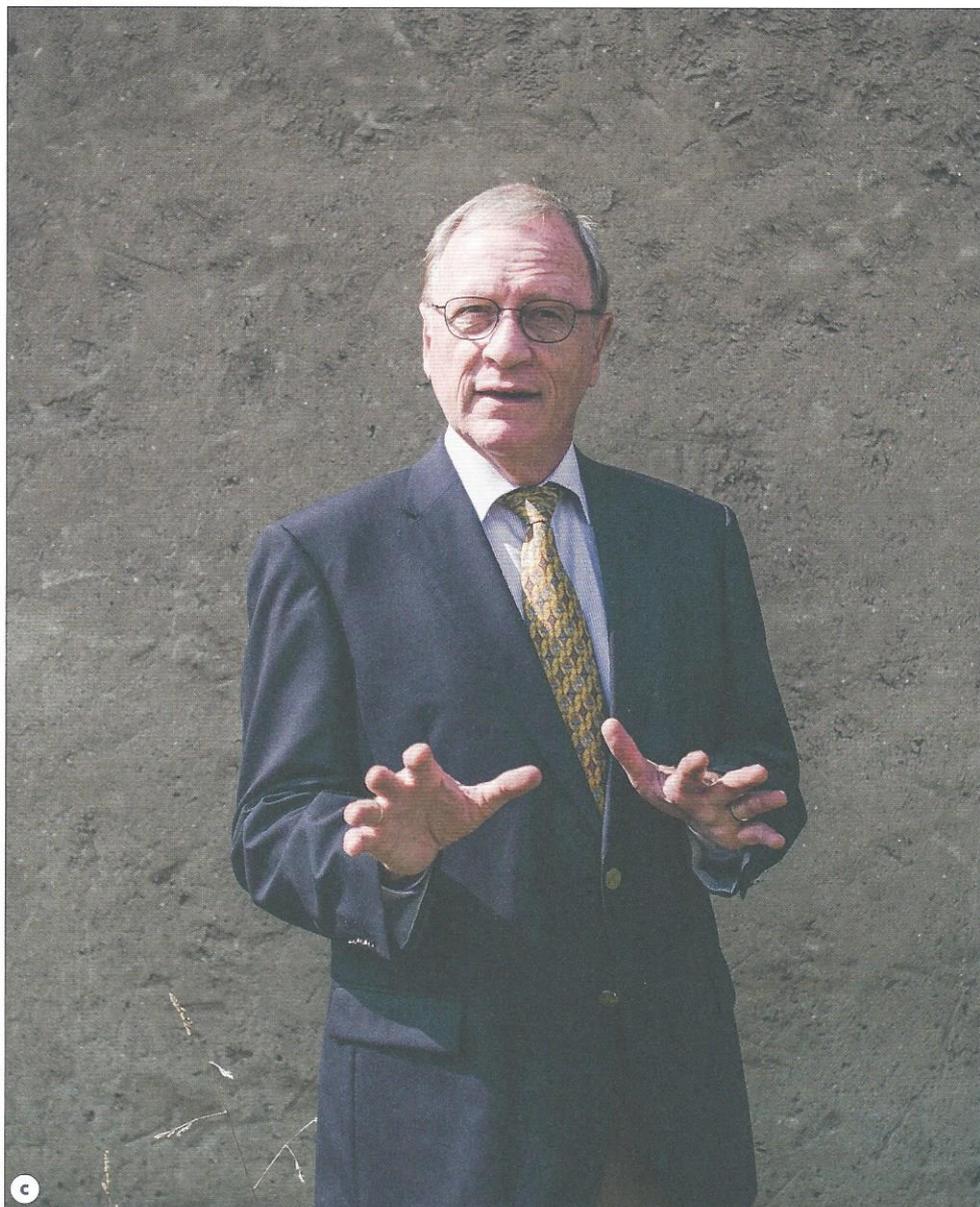
> JOHN FRANK

"You need trainers who can stretch employees and their competences, who understand that everyone is different," adds Biver, whose firm offers soft skills training. "There's a great need to look at the individual, to build on his or her strengths. A group of people simply listening to a teacher isn't very effective. The most powerful combination is a workshop on a specific topic with a group where you get input from others, followed by one-to-one tailor-made sessions."

**SET GOOD GOALS**

But getting the method right isn't the only challenge. "The goal of training is to provide new and better ways of working effectively and efficiently," in Frank's view. "To make sure training is successful it's also important to proceed logically. For instance, senior managers should have received the training before the other employees. There's nothing worse for the trainees than trying to implement what they have just learned and meeting resistance from superiors. If the senior managers have not had the training, then they must at least be willing to enthusiastically support and permit the use of the new techniques or tools and provide active reinforcement for the use of the new training on-the-job."

Holland advises companies that want their training to succeed that: "The key is to clearly define which benefits, improvements and results are anticipated



**C.** John Frank: training is a process, not an event

as a consequence. The main reason training is provided should be for the benefit of the organisation, and whilst there are certain intangible side effects such as moral, loyalty and team spirit, where possible, outcomes, performance measures and objectives should be distinctly stated before the training starts. Treat training as a process not

an event. Plan and prepare carefully before and follow up afterwards. Employees should know exactly why they are participating, and what they should achieve individually or collectively as a consequence. Training is not a punishment, it has to be seen as a reward and part of someone's professional and personal development."<