








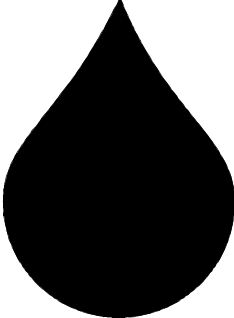
A Manager's Gardening Guide to Growing People


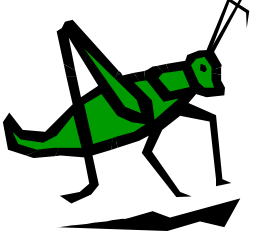


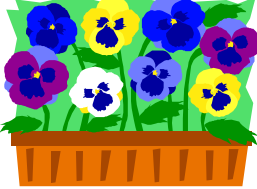
By Rebecca Morgan, CSP, CMC

Growing people is like gardening – given the right circumstances, people, like plants, will grow and flourish. But, like an ill-planned or neglected garden, people, without proper development can fail. Training sessions can yield remarkable developmental results – or few – depending on how the trainee's manager supports the training.

After over 20 years in the people-development business, and 20 years as an avid gardener, I began to see the parallels. This epiphany happened in the garden, of course! Before sending any of your staff to training, consider the ideas in this guide to cultivating people.

| | <i>Gardening</i> | <i>Cultivating People</i> |
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|  | Prepare the soil. Remove any rocks or obstacles. If the earth isn't tilled and augmented, the seeds will not sprout, will be stunted, or will die. | Prepare the environment. Make sure learners have coverage for their responsibilities so they won't be interrupted during sessions. Appoint someone else to respond to questions while the learner is focusing on learning. |
|  | Don't just scatter the seeds. Scattering the seeds on top of unprepared soil means 95% of the seeds will get eaten by birds and bugs, or not sprout. For better success, sow the seeds carefully, then cover with rich earth. | When anyone can self-select a course based on what they think <i>might</i> be useful, the results may be unhappy participants, managers and training departments. With no preparation, careful selection and follow up, most training is a waste of time. |
|  | Select the right plant. A redwood won't grow well in a small space. Ground cover won't become a tree. Understand what you want and choose the best plant for the job. | Select the right learner. If someone doesn't like people, no amount of training is going to turn him into a stellar customer service rep. Make sure you are not trying to fix someone's personality by sending them to training. Instead, perhaps s/he needs a transfer or other duties. |

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|  | <p>Be clear on your expected outcomes. If you want ample tomatoes to make pasta sauce, you'll need to plant enough plants to yield abundant fruit. If you've had sufficient yields with a certain variety, you can expect similar results again.</p> | <p>What do you want to happen as a result of this development experience? Do you want the learner to be a better presenter, make more sales, accomplish more? How will you measure their performance before and after the experience to determine if the effort was a success?</p> |
|  | <p>Plant in the right season. Each plant has certain circumstances that make it grow well. Planting in the wrong season will not produce healthy plants, if any at all.</p> | <p>Make sure the timing is good. Is this the right time for developing the learner? Will s/he be able to concentrate on learning and practicing new skills? Or is the environment too rocky (chaotic) to allow time for reflection and practice? Is s/he motivated to learn right now, or too busy fighting fires?</p> |
|  | <p>Prepare the seeds/plants. Some seeds sprout better after overnight soaking. Transplants perform better with their root balls separated. Some bulbs produce the best blooms after 6 weeks of cold before planting. Knowing what your plants need and giving it to them produces the best results.</p> | <p>Prepare the learner. Determine what are the growth areas, and how can s/he best get the development they need. If a course is the best solution, the learner should list 3-5 learning objectives, and take responsibility to get what they need from the course, the instructor, or other resources.</p> |
|  | <p>Carefully and thoughtfully plant the seeds/plants. Don't just haphazardly throw them into the ground. Caringly place each one, gently covering them with rich soil and water.</p> | <p>Send learners into the experience knowing they have coverage and support from their team and manager. Their mind can't be back at their desk <i>and</i> in the training session.</p> |
|  | <p>Fertilize, weed and water regularly. Without fertilizer, plants are stunted. Weeds can quickly overtake desired plants if unchecked. And without the right amount of water plants either drown or wilt.</p> | <p>Regularly reinforce and coach. Development is an ongoing activity. Until one has competency, you need to continually be conscious of weeding out old, ineffective behaviors. "Catching people doing something right" is the watchword while people are mastering new skills. Coaching to refine those new skills is critical.</p> |

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|  | <p>Allow time to germinate. Don't expect seeds to sprout the next day after planting. It takes time for the seed to develop and take hold.</p> | <p>New skills don't always show up overnight. Don't send someone to a training and expect him/her to immediately use new skills. It may take a week or more for him/her to be comfortable trying something new.</p> |
|  | <p>Protect from pests. Especially in the early stages, new growth is vulnerable to birds, pests and animals. You must protect your new sprouts from being devoured.</p> | <p>Protect your learner from criticism. A new skill is likely to not be done particularly well the first few times. When someone is trying something new, it's important that they be allowed to do it poorly at first.</p> |
|  | <p>Know when to transplant. If a plant isn't doing well, it may be because the sun or soil isn't right. Learn as much as you can about the plant to determine if it is time to transplant.</p> | <p>When someone isn't doing well, it might be time to give them new duties.</p> |
|  | <p>Stake up when plants start to fall over. Overgrown plants need support, or they can break off. Staked plants grow taller and stronger, and produce more abundant yields.</p> | <p>Coach and support someone if they start to falter. Even after displaying competence in new skills, when people are under too much stress, they may revert back to old ways. Make sure you support them in using their more effective skills.</p> |
|  | <p>Celebrate the results. Enjoy the flowers and delicious fruits and vegetables. Your caring gardening has yielded delicious and appealing results.</p> | <p>Acknowledge positive changes and celebrate successes. A lot of work has gone into this effort, so make sure to enjoy the results.</p> |

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