

Agency

TALENT CONTEST

Why the average coffee server gets more training than most agency staffers

By Andrew McMains andrew.mcmains@adweek.com

How's this for a java-like jolt: A Starbucks barista gets more training than an ad agency staffer. That bit of startling news comes courtesy of Arnold's new report on talent management, which gave the ad industry a failing grade. But perhaps this isn't that surprising given how little agencies—and their holding companies—invest in training, especially compared to other talent-driven companies including McKinsey, Goldman Sachs, Google and Procter & Gamble. Arnold used such companies as benchmarks for its "Transforming Talent Management" survey, which Arnold CEO Andrew Benett unveiled at this month's 4A's conference. Benett described the industry's talent retention and development problem in hourglass terms: some training at the bottom levels, very little in the middle and more at the top. That partly explains why almost a third of the 3,000 people that Arnold surveyed plan to leave their current agencies in 12 months. In short, the survey found that agencies lose employees because they see little career pathing, feel they're learning on the job and find new employers that invest more in training. Subsequent mea culpas by holding company CEOs, and their acknowledgement of the talent erosion problem aside, Adweek did a little more digging to better understand that Starbucks-agency divide.

Types of training

Consists mainly of outside conferences, manager-led workshops and seminars run by outside consultants, according to a 4A's survey conducted in 2000, the last such survey conducted. Only half of those agencies surveyed had mentoring programs.

Time spent

That 4A's survey also noted that on average, an agency employee gets 16 hours of training each year. Likewise, a typical manager spends only two days a year on training, including his or her own.

Level of investment

Each year agencies spend roughly \$1,000 per employee on training. But subsequent polling of 4A's members has revealed deep cuts in this practice, in some cases as much as 50 percent.

Types of training

Reportedly includes a training manual, tutorials, a "learning coach" and hands-on practice. Tutorials cover everything from drink preparation and customer service to retail skills and coffee knowledge.

Time spent

A minimum of 24 hours in the first month, according to a case history account in McGraw-Hill's Strategic Management. Some tutorials and workshops last up to four hours each.

Level of investment

Starbucks doesn't say, but as Arnold's Benett notes, "The average full-time hourly employee earns \$35,000 per year plus health and dental benefits—and a free pound of coffee every week. Not even allowing for overhead, that easily works out to more than [what] the 4A's reports the ad industry spends per employee."

