

Details, details: 5 online tools to help employees focus



Increased workloads ... tighter deadlines ... fewer resources. All of these have conspired to put a premium on employees' ability to remain focused on the details of their jobs.

Managers often urge employees to pay attention to detail, but rarely do they help their teams develop it as a skill.

Here are five free or low-cost sources of online courses, games, tests and other materials designed to measure and improve attention to detail.

- 1. Skills Converged.** Free attention-to-detail exercises include "What was in the box?"; "Did you catch that?"; "Lists versus images"; "Touch Nine Cones" and "Andy Says." Visit www.skillsconverged.com and click on "Free training exercises," then "Attention and focus" in the Categories list at right.
- 2. Trainerbubble.** Find two free training games: "Mental Agility Test" focuses on reading instructions. "Origami Barmy" highlights the lack of details in written and verbal communications. Visit www.trainerbubble.com and click on "training products," then "free training games."
- 3. Trainers' Library.** Several course modules focus on attention to detail in customer service emails, verbal communication, listening and following instructions. Price: \$75 to \$945 for one trainer. Course lengths range from 30 to 240 minutes. Visit www.trainerslibrary.com and click on "Course models," then "Attention to detail."
- 4. EmployTest.** The free sample test measures focus on detail in four categories—names, numbers, dates and phone numbers. Visit www.employtest.com and click on "Test list," then "Clerical skills test," then "Attention to details tests."
- 5. Queendom.** The 26-question free test measures whether a person possesses attention-to-detail personality characteristics. Go to www.queendom.com/tests and click on "Attitude and lifestyle tests," then "Attention to detail test."

Advice: Recognize employees who go the longest without making mistakes. Encourage people who work in teams to double-check each other's work. Give awards or other recognition to employees who establish a track record for paying attention to detail.