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Train Office Staffers Too

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**If you aren't learning something new everyday, then you are falling behind. I have heard this statement all my life, and it has never been truer than it is today.**

I write this after returning from this year's National Automobile Dealers Assn. convention with its exhibition of dealership innovations, products and services.

What an exciting time to be in the car business. But how are your employees going to learn about all the new and better ways to conduct business? You've got to train them!

Dealers have always spent time, energy and dollars training salespersons and service technicians. That, in itself, is not a bad thing. (Where I live, the Metro Atlanta Automobile Dealers Association provides a great program for both the sales force and the technicians. The association also conducts these courses for other dealer associations nationwide. Contact Randy Nelson at MAADA for more information.)

But how much training is provided for employees who aren't selling a car or turning a wrench? Not much.

Here are some training areas to consider and suggestions to ponder:

Human resources

Are you providing adequate training to your employees in the areas of harassment or diversity issues? Are your HR directors allowed time and dollars to stay current on issues? Many of the national HR law firms provide classes and advice on current issues. Compli has software that can assist in many HR areas, including on-line continual training for your employees.

Financial analysis for the non — accounting manager

Do your general manager, sales manager, parts or service manager and body shop manager know how to adequately read and interpret the monthly dealership's financial statement? NCM does a great job of teaching the basics of financial statement analysis in its "Boot Camp" series for dealership managers. My firm, Dixon Hughes, assists NCM in such training.

### Finance and insurance

This is an area that continues to see great change and new regulations from both the federal and state levels of government. There are many good compliance trainers. Gil Van Over is an excellent and knowledgeable presenter.

### Accounting department

Numerous sources in the marketplace provide accounting training. This area often is neglected by the average dealership. Just because debits and credits have been around for thousands of years, it doesn't mean there isn't something new in the accounting world, from computer-system utilization to internal process improvements to fraud audits.

Another source of training that has been overlooked by the dealership industry is the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

The AICPA conducts an annual Auto Dealership Conference. I serve on the steering committee for this 2-day conference to be held October 26-27 in Phoenix.

This year's conference will take on a new twist. Along with the general sessions that cover current issues within the industry, the agenda will include break-out concurrent sessions that follow three separate tracks.

One track will be for experienced CPAs working in the industry. Another will focus on operational issues for dealership controllers and chief financial officers. The third track will focus on basic accounting issues for those with less practical experience in dealerships. It is a training ground for office managers and staffers getting their feet wet in the dealership world.

If you are a dealership controller or CFO and have not attended this annual conference, consider attending. If you are a dealer and your controller or CFO have not attended, send them. You will be impressed with the new ideas brought back to your dealership.

If you need contact information for any of the providers mentioned in this article, e-mail me at [jdavis@dixon-hughes.com](mailto:jdavis@dixon-hughes.com). Happy learning!

*John Davis is a certified public accountant with Dixon Hughes PLLC.*

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