

Return On Investment In Certifying Staff, Part 2

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Posted By: **Heather Reynolds** in [CWA Blog](#)



During a recent Instructor Certification Course, participants were asked to share their takeaways from the course delivery. One student shared the following:

"This course elevated these scattered experiences into clear risk management concepts, allowing me to more fully understand the safety logic behind these actions. This will be of very practical value to me in leading students and providing safety guidance in the future."

Article At A Glance

- **Writer:** Heather Reynolds, Education Consultant for the CWA. She is part of our new year-long series on issues and topics surrounding certification and education.
- **Who Should Read:** This article is for Decision Makers and those interested in CWA Certifications.
- **What Will You Learn:** How your staff is the true ROI for a CWA Certification.
- **Tie-Ins, Resources, or Further Reading:** Visit the [CWA Certification Dashboard](#) to learn more.

The goal of instruction is to deepen knowledge and understanding for the student. There is a big difference in identifying as a climber who creates their own routes to challenge themselves and being a routesetter.

This is the same as instructors. Being a climber is very different than being an instructor who

teaches not only climbing, but risk management. Instructors and routesetters alike are challenged with more than the skill of climbing or putting holds on the wall.

Quality routesetters and instructors have better discernment about risks, predicting and managing these potential problems before they occur. They have a role in customer service and sales for the indoor climbing gym – after all, their products encourage member retention and growth.

The reality of high turnover in facilities can make employee professional development costly. However, certifying staff translates into more than just efficient routesetting, forerunning practices, and quality instruction. There are many intangible benefits.

Certifying staff inherently makes your facility more risk-averse. This is a huge component of any certification. This means staff will be able to spot risks more easily, quicker, and know what to do when (not if) incidents occur.

Staff who are better trained can also take on more roles and responsibilities. A well-trained staff can monitor climbing activities, work as counselors at the camp events, assist with coaching, and perhaps even assist with the training of new staff. Counting on an employee to set more variety of grades, or for more diverse audiences, can be invaluable to a small team.

Next, consider the trust fostered between certified staff and management. I was recently at a climbing facility doing my own climbing and watched as a certified instructor walked over immediately when he saw something that gave him a little concern. He was calm and direct, assisted in managing the risks, and no one else in the facility was aware that there was almost a problem, except me. It gave me a sense that this instructor was skilled and knowledgeable.

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In the same facility a few months earlier, I was being lowered, and the belayer was using the Gri Gri + for the first time. She pulled too hard on the cam, and I was stuck. She was surprised and did not know what to do.

Although I was suspended in the air, I talked her through it, and I arrived on the ground safely. I looked around, and there were two other staff members on the floor. Neither came over to assist the belayer; I believe neither even realized there was a problem. Neither was a certified instructor. This is not to say that all certified staff will never make mistakes; rather, the point is that someone who has committed their effort to earning a certification is often more engaged in doing their job well.

The investment in employees doesn't guarantee that they will stay with you, particularly part-time employees. But an investment in anyone can encourage a feeling of value and belonging.

Certain employees want to advance through the climbing wall industry. Professional development opportunities like certifications will help them reach their full potential, and help your facility improve simultaneously.

Human skills are the skills that foster better customer experience, better efficiency in work performance, and better engagement in their work. Investing in the right people with the right opportunities could not only reduce risk and improve the quality of a client experience, but it also creates great humans.

About The Author



recreation programming.

Heather Reynolds is a licensed kinesiologist, High Five Trainer (Sport, PCHD), CEC Climbing Coach, CWA Climbing Wall Instructor Certification Provider Trainer. She works as a Consultant to the CWA. She blends her knowledge of movement, physiology, and education to develop a multitude of successful climbing programs designed to support and engage youth. Having worked with youth for over 30 years as a recreation instructor, leader and educator, Heather supports the values and expertise available in the High Five Program, bringing quality assurance to youth-based sport and



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