

TRANSLATE TRAINING INTO RESULTS – use it or lose it

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An American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) study reported that only 3% of training was measured at Kirkpatrick's "level 4" of training evaluation results where there is an impact on the organization. In contrast, 95% of training was measured at "level 1" that indicated the participants liked the training.

A further breakdown of the study revealed that 37% of training was measured at "level 2" where participants learned the material with only 13% of training measured at "level 3" where participants applied the learning in the workplace.

So what can an organization do to insure that new learnings are both retained and applied?

First let's define two terms, "training" and "intervention". Training is imparting knowledge with no designed linkage to usage, implementation or results; it is left to the individual participant to decide to incorporate it into their job function to produce new results or behaviors – or not. Whether they do or they don't, they are deemed to have "ticked" the box; they have been trained and the organization has some expectation of an ROI on their training investment but seldom has a method of defining or measuring that return.

Conversely, intervention is training with a purposeful element designed into the program that necessitates, or at the very least strongly encourages, usage/implementation of the training received to achieve new processes and improved productivity that may include behavior change. Below are some suggestions to encourage, or mandate, that training learnings be incorporated into new, day-to-day, organizational behaviors that enhance productivity and the return on training dollars:

- First and foremost managers/supervisors must permit the training to be utilized. They must actively encourage, indeed demand, that training based new process changes and behaviors be implemented as well as accept the imperfections/mistakes inherent in a new learning curve.
 - Send participants to training with at least one existing problem to be solved by using the training. With this "use the training to solve a problem" mindset they will see the training through a more practical lens. Implement their suggestions after training, even if only on a trial basis.
 - Link training to an appraisal/feedback process. Formal would be best, informal but consistent across time at a minimum. Consider using 360° feedback, formal or informal, from the "boss", peers and direct reports related to the new results and behaviors suggested by the training.
 - Have the newly trained employee head up a brainstorming session(s) to see how best to apply the new learnings. Implement the group's recommendations.
 - Have each participant prepare a 1-hour briefing/training session on what they took away from the training, what they intend to do differently as a result of the training and then deliver that briefing/training to their direct reports, work groups and/or other groups within the organization.
 - Have each participant provide a list of new behaviors/results that others can expect of them based on what they learned in the training. This list is an agenda item at each meeting with the participant's supervisor. The supervisor confirms the new behaviors in action by soliciting informal feedback from participant's peers and direct reports.
 - Divide training program participants into 4 groups. Assign each group one of the articles below. Have each group prepare a presentation on how the tenets of each article, coupled with those from the training, could best be utilized by themselves and others throughout the organization. The presentation should include recommendations for promoting the needed results/behaviors of both managers and employees that would demonstrate the use of these tenets. Have each group present their recommendations to their work groups and throughout the organization.
- Sull, D.N. & Spinosa, C., "Promised-Based Management: The Essence of Execution", Harvard Business Review, April 2007, (Reprint R0704E)

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- Christensen, C.M., Marx, M. & Stevenson, H.H., “The Tools of Cooperation and Change”, Harvard Business Review, OCT 2006, (Reprint #R0610D)
- Drucker, Peter F., “Managing Oneself”, Harvard Business Review, MAR-APR 1999, (Reprint #99204)

To add insult to injury, ASTD indicated that by the time a participant get back to their job, they've lost 90% of what they've learned in training. They only retain 10%. Otherwise said, if you don't use it, you lose it. By utilizing the interventions outlined above organizations can better ensure that their training investment provides an increased return measured in new results, greater productivity and/or new behaviors within the organization.