



Predictive Learning Analytics™: A Revolutionary New Way to Evaluate Learning

BY KEN PHILLIPS, THIRD IN THE PLA SERIES

Are you frustrated with the traditional approach to measuring and evaluating learning? If so, you're not alone – and the good news is that there now is an alternative.

In the previous article, I described what Predictive Learning Analytics™ (PLA) is, how it works, and the benefits of using PLA. In this article, I will explain how PLA is different from traditional learning measurement and evaluation and the five-level evaluation model.

The initial four-step evaluation model (the steps later became known as levels of evaluation) – Reaction, Learning, Behavior, and Results – was first created by Raymond Katzell in the early 1950s. It was subsequently popularized by Don Kirkpatrick in 1959 when he was asked by ATD (then known as ASTD) to write a series of four articles, one on each of the evaluation steps, that appeared in the Journal of the American Society of Training Directors, ASTD's trade magazine.

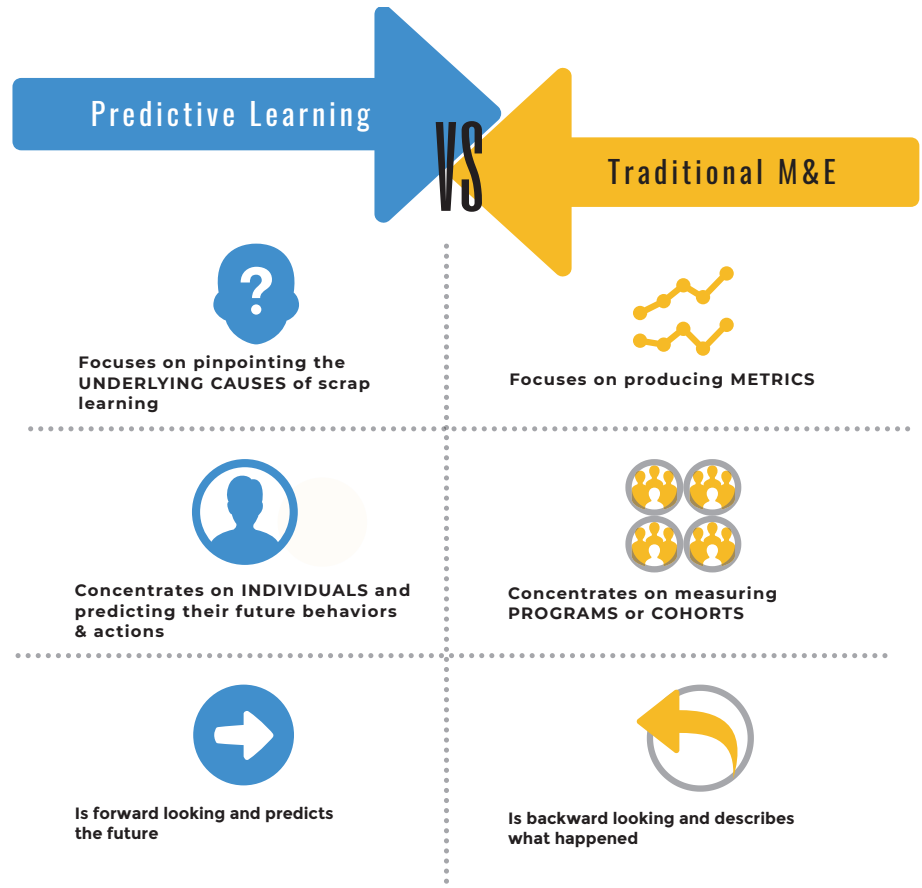
In 1974, Jack Phillips (who later founded the ROI Institute) became interested in the levels and contacted Don about what systems, processes, and standards he had developed around implementing the levels. Learning that Don hadn't developed any of those details and that he was relying on practitioners, who were working with the four levels, to add those specifics, Jack did just that. In 1983, Jack published his refinements in the Handbook of Training and Evaluation Measurement Methods,

and they included the addition of systematic processes and rules for working with data and the addition of Level 5: ROI to the model.

In 2009, the model was again updated this time by Jim and Wendy Kirkpatrick when they created the Kirkpatrick Business Partnership Model and developed a set of five foundational principles for using the levels. They also turned the model upside down in keeping with their Principle 1: "The End is the Beginning" so instead of starting at

Level 1: Reaction and working up to Level 4: Results, the Business Partnership Model begins with Level 4: Results and works down to Level 1: Reaction.

Given its long history (over 60 years) and additional refinements over the years, you might be wondering what does Predictive Learning Analytics™ offer that isn't already covered by the 5-level evaluation model? The answer is three critically important things as seen in the table below:



Now you might be wondering why are these differences important? The answer is because, if you can pinpoint the underlying causes of scrap learning associated with a learning program you are suddenly in a position to take corrective actions to minimize or eliminate those causes and maximize training transfer. In short, while traditional measurement and evaluation is about producing metrics, PLA is about isolating the factors that need to change to increase training transfer. With this clear and focused understanding of where a learning program is succeeding and where it's not, you can take the right steps to increase training transfer without resorting to guesswork or trial and error methods.

In the next two articles, I will explain how you can use the PLA™ methodology to predict the future. Specifically,

how to predict which learners are most likely, at risk and least likely to apply what they learned in a training program back on the job and which managers of the learners are likely to do a good or a poor job of supporting the training they directed their employees to attend. Something else you can't do with the traditional five-level evaluation model.

In summary, while PLA has some connection with traditional M&E, it also is a revolutionary new way to measure, monitor and manage the amount of scrap learning associated with a training program, something that was not previously available with traditional M&E.

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