

Making Performance Real: Six Paths to Training That Matters

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Article abstract

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Making Performance Real: Six Paths to Training That Matters

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Training matters not only for business growth but also for talent acquisition and employee retention. Many experts and researchers highlight the importance and benefits of employee learning and development (Salas et al., 2012). The ATD (Association of Talent Development) 2019 State of the Industry and Training Magazine's 2019 Training Industry Report indicates that billions of dollars and a tremendous amount of time are being spent on training. Many companies are concerned about the value of their current training programs, especially their leadership development programs (Deloitte, 2018; Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2018; Beer et al., 2016; Bernal & Schuller, 2016). As we are experiencing a rapid digital transformation and tough economic times, companies are questioning the effectiveness of their leadership development models. This paper, first, aims to examine seven issues in the learning industry that lead to ineffective training from a practitioner's point of a view. Then it discusses the Peterson, Song, and Udell (PSU) Training Model, an organizational talent development framework consisting of six specific, focused paths. We also focus on our 4E Training Design Model that resolves issues and makes performance real based on evidence from scientific research and insights from our experiences.

1. Introduction

Deb was hired to be a senior director of training at a large telemarketing company. When she was hired, she was encouraged to make sure she focused on training "that would make a difference." Having recently completed her MA in instructional design, Deb was certain she knew what training was about. She knew how to develop training and learning exercises that got participants involved, and her early efforts got great evaluations from the participants. During her first year Deb and her team developed four new courses in sales, management, leadership, and communication. These were state-of-the-art courses. Deb's group taught each course ten times during the first year she worked at the company and the average ratings for the courses were 4.9 on a five-point scale. Everyone loved her courses and her teacher evaluations were also rated 4.9 on a five-point scale. Deb was working hard, and her team was killing themselves, but she was very pleased with their work. When Deb reported her success to the CEO, he responded by thanking her for working so hard and getting such fine ratings. He then said, "Is all this training having any impact on the company? Is our turnover down? Are our sales per person up? Are our work processes effective? This training is only good if it is making a difference to our organization and our strategic goals. If it doesn't make a difference to the bottom line it doesn't matter." Deb had her training team evaluate the impact of their training work and discovered that turnover had gone up, sales had gone down, and the organization was not doing as well as when she started. When discussing

this evaluation with her team Deb determined that she was doing hard work, but not work that mattered. She had failed to focus her learning efforts on changes that would make a difference to the organization.

Deb and her training team worked hard and received high ratings for their courses and instructors, but their learning intervention had failed to improve the organization's performance. According to training industry reports, organizations spend billions of dollars and a tremendous amount of time on training per year (Ho et.al., 2019; Freifeld, 2019). However, many CEOs are concerned that many of their leadership development programs fail to link learning to organizational impact and to the bottom line. Like Deb and her training teams, companies reward high ratings for courses and instructors while hoping for change in behaviours and performance (Kerr, 1995). Peterson and Nielson (2009) describe what happens when we complete training that does not focus on organizational needs. "Suppose you are building a road on a mountainside leading to the site for your new cabin. You have worked for months clearing sagebrush and aspen trees. You've moved rocks and filled in roadbed through the exhausting heat, the raging downpours, and even early snow. You've pushed forward, based on your best understanding of the surveyor's plans. The road winds over a dusty hill, cuts through the trees, moves along a rocky ridge, and then—you find yourself at the end of the road, looking down from the edge of a cliff." Unfocused training looks and feels like this. "The building of the road was purposeful. Your effort was admirable. The blood, sweat, and tears you poured into the project were real and your commitment was profound. But, none of that really matters! You are still left with a road to nowhere."

2. Training That Matters Focuses on Organizational Needs

Training that does not directly influence an organization's desired results leads an organization directly over the cliff. Focused training is training that directly influences an organization's desired results. We are advocates of effective talent development. This paper will discuss how to do training that makes a difference for your organization. As you read, here are some questions to think about: How can Deb's situation be avoided? How can training experiences consistently ensure that stakeholder demands for increased performance are met?

Let us define what we mean by training. Training can be defined as the "planned and systematic activities" designed to teach knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSAs) and to teach participants how to do tasks in a way that consistently improves performance (Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001; Salas et al., 2012). It is the process of inculcating specific KSAs in a person. Training should result in improvement of an organization's performance. The focus of this paper is on using training to improve performance. What is the appropriate role for senior executives, middle managers, and frontline supervisors to ensure that training will consistently increase performance? What must professionals in training do to make performance improvement take place?

3. Training Must Impact Organizational Results

3.1. Does Training Justify Its Costs?

Recently we consulted with a prominent manufacturing company that wanted to know if their learning workshops made a difference for their company and if the difference was worth the costs. The human resources development team described their competency map and how it is revolutionizing their learning efforts. They discussed how their state-of-the-art learning models helped teach each competency. They approached learning as a process and not an event.

After listening patiently for a while, we asked this group of training folks to tell us why they were teaching their workshops. There was a long pause before one manager responded, “Well of course, to teach the competencies.” Others then chimed in and explained that they knew what they were doing because their training is competency-based. Our response, “We are happy to learn you are teaching competencies, but our question still stands, *why are you teaching the competencies or providing the workshops?*” Their reaction to our response, “Don’t be silly! Everyone needs to learn competencies to be more effective—we are a true learning organization.”

3.2. What Really Does Drive Training and Learning Interventions?

“Let us ask our question in a different way. *Why does your organization pay money to develop your training department?*” Finally, in frustration one training manager said, “This is crazy, I can’t say why for certain, but I can tell you why we offer one course. The company has recently gone through six costly discrimination lawsuits. The CEO demanded we teach a diversity course to the entire company. She wants the lawsuits eliminated!” This was the true reason for the training. This kind of true reason is what should drive training experiences.

4. What Should the Focus of Organizational Learning Be?

Competencies and learning models are important and should be part of a true organizational learning framework, but talent management professionals and CEOs must focus their learning programs on the needed organizational change and organizational results. If training does not focus on organizational needs, it is unnecessary. Training should directly influence an organization’s goals and results. A former chief learning officer of a well-known global joint venture company operating in Korea shared his frustration with us: “It was not easy to persuade top management why we needed to offer a leadership training program.” He could not clearly link learning to organizational outcomes, which were one of the top concerns of the CEO.

Learning professionals often focus on competencies and learning interventions and forget “why” training is needed. The inability to link learning to organizational impact and to the bottom line is a major challenge of learning professionals and all managers – senior executives, middle managers, front line managers, etc. This problem is why companies cut back on training during hard times. This problem is why companies eliminate courses they suspect are not helpful. It is why training vendors lose contracts. Companies do not perceive that this type of training provides a positive return. The question associated with this problem is: What approach will help professional trainers and developers as well as appropriate HRD staff and outside vendors better relate learning to organizational results? And, what approach will help all managers understand the critical role they must play? To succeed in developing and delivering effective training, neither managers nor learning professionals can do it alone. It takes both to develop real, sustainable training that improves results. The answer to these questions is what this paper is about.

Today, we have moved from the Industrial Age into the Knowledge Worker Age. In the Industrial Age, over 80% of the value added to goods and services came from machinery and manual labour, and there was a greater alignment and connection between work and producing desired results. But in the Knowledge Worker Age, 70% to 80% of the value added to goods and services comes from knowledge work - that is, human input, where the connection between work and desired results has become blurred. In this global, digitized economy, competition is ten times what it was before. More and more of the products and services that organizations provide are not significantly different between competitors. Developing training experiences that are aligned with organizational goals and having well-trained employees who apply what they have learned is a great way for an organization to differentiate itself from other competitive organizations.

5. The Creativity and Innovation Age

We are currently witnessing a new movement from the Knowledge Worker Age to a higher value age, the Creativity and Innovation Age. Increasingly, the Creativity and Innovation Age is what smart companies are harnessing to generate top-line growth. This Age is changing. It isn't just about knowledge. It is about creativity, imagination, and above all innovation. It is also about creating innovative learning experiences that develop organizational goals and that successfully utilize learning experiences to enhance the performance of employees. This new Creativity and Innovation Age focuses on:

- **Observation** – going out and attending training, as well as observing sales reps, watching families eat in restaurants, or viewing patient treatment in a hospital.
- **Storytelling** – listening to the stories people tell and then telling their own stories about products and training that lead to greater chances for organizational success.
- **Organizational Processes and Culture** – building an organizational culture that values high levels of creativity and innovation.

In this new and intense age of creativity and innovation, training programs must contribute towards the goals of organizations. The necessity to do training that will make a difference in producing organizational success or failure is critical. Having a work force that participates in training programs that provide real innovative training will give your organization a better competitive edge. As consultants for over 30 years, we have researched the way people have conducted training from the scientific movement through the human relations movement to the present. We are products of the human relations movement in organizations. During those years, we watched, conducted, and participated in many great training and development programs that were meant to enhance organizational productivity and make organizations stronger by helping people become better. We have measured the impact and value of hundreds of these programs and have discovered that many training programs do not provide the intended impact on organizations. *What can an organization do to increase its performance through training?* This is the key question this paper will answer. Before we answer this question, let's review the current potential impact of doing effective training that enhances the organization.

6. What Organizations Currently Invest in Training

Table 1. ATD (2018) Costs of Training.

Size of Corporation	Definition	Training Spending Per Person
Large	10 000+ Employees	\$707
Medium	500–9999 Employees	\$787
Small	1–499 Employees	\$2412
Average Expenditure Per Employee		\$1299

Currently, our research indicates that at least 50% of training is ineffective in most organizations. We are currently doing research to determine the actual percentage, but we are quite certain that at least 50% of the training currently being done is ineffective. Whatever the percentage, it represents a lot of money that could be saved by improving the impact of learning programs. James and Wendy Kirkpatrick (2018) indicate the following:

“Training alone yields behavior change only 15 percent of the time, on average. Eighty-five percent of training graduates fall prey to a myriad of factors that influence them to do

something other than what they learned.” The Kirkpatrick’s seem to substantiate our research that much of the training currently being done is ineffective. It is not being used by the training participants.

Several years ago, a large high-tech company asked us to evaluate their overall training costs and the impact of their training efforts. Their training budget was over \$150 million. They listed over 2500 courses offered by the training department. The organization offered over thirty leadership courses. Many of these leadership courses introduced conflicting competencies. Also, few of the courses they delivered taught competencies based on the organization’s competency models. Our research determined that the training was not having the intended impact. In our practice, we see this happening frequently. Having a large training and education budget and/or offering many courses is not important. Bock (2015), the former senior vice president of people operations at Google, argues that having a huge training budget is not evidence that organizations are investing in their people. As Salas et al. (2012) mentioned in their extensive literature review of training, training works *only* when it is designed, delivered, and implemented in a proper way. What makes a difference to an organization is to provide effective training that is innovative and impactful and tied to the organization’s needs. We know training *can* and *must* change and drive organizations.

7. Seven Issues in the Learning Industry that Lead to Ineffective Training

There are many issues that concern us and that lead to ineffective training. Resolving these issues can have a significant impact on organizations. We present here the seven issues that concern us the most and that have the greatest impact on organizational change.

Issue 1 - The inability to link learning to organizational impact and to the bottom line is a major driver of ineffective training in the learning industry.

Many people in the learning industry are unable to correctly identify the causes of an organization’s performance gaps and they do not know what to do about it if they do identify gaps. Many do not realize that identifying the causes of poor performance is a must. This leads to the failure to align the purpose of a training and development program with the overall business strategy and goals of a company. Organizational results must be the focus of the learning profession. This focus must exist before and especially after the training event as well as during the event.

Is This Training Making a Difference?

A retail/wholesale chain of stores selling to independent auto repair shops hired us as consultants to develop a sales opportunity and productivity system for their outside sales team, install it, and then teach the sales reps how to use it. The system was developed using the latest technology at the time and successfully installed. The post-installation tests showed that the system worked and if used appropriately would increase sales. The training classes the sales team attended were well-received. All participants rated the training content as useful. They said they felt well-engaged during the class and were clear on how to apply what they learned. Through the use of role plays and end-of-session testing we could see that the reps learned how to use this new sales system. However, after one year and many thousands of dollars spent by the company on this sales system training, there was no increase in sales. Our client’s desired results were not favorably impacted. What happened? Organizational results were the focus during the training event as well as before the project commenced. The retail chain knew that the project’s goal was to increase sales. However, after the course was finished, sales

management did not make sure that the sales team was correctly applying what they learned. The leaders and the sales team lost focus and sales did not increase. Due to post-training loss of focus, learning application was not linked to organizational impact.

“Transfer of training” has been a fundamental concern for training professionals and management in terms of whether or not training costs can be justified (Salas et al., 2012). Although participants mastered new knowledge and skills in training, lack of management support caused them to lose motivation to apply new competencies to their jobs. The inability to link learning to organizational impact and to the bottom line is a major driver of ineffective training in the learning industry.

Issue 2 - Determining accurately what a learner must know, do, and stop doing for organizational change to occur.

Inaccurate selection of learner competencies is a major driver of ineffective training. Selecting competencies that drive organizational results is essential when attempting to help an organization change through the use of learning interventions. Inadequate planning for a training program leads to ineffective training. Poor planning does not allow for using metrics to link the organization’s desired results and expected post-training behaviors to the learning experience.

Global Manufacturing Company Quickie Preparation

Sujin is the manager of a leading Global Manufacturing Company’s HRD Center. She has a master’s degree in education from a prominent university. When we talked to her on the phone and met her in her office, she seemed to be very busy with many assignments. As consultants, we would go to Sujin’s company a few times each year to deliver training programs. A few years ago, Sujin asked us to design and conduct an eight-hour training program for international managers and engineers who are stationed in the Korean office for one year. The participants were from the US, China, Vietnam, and other parts of the world. Most of them had many years of experience as engineers or managers. The overseas staff was brought into the main factory and headquarters to become familiar with the company culture and its systems. The company believed that this might expedite their global operation. Sujin usually contacts us three to four weeks before a program is scheduled. For this training she emailed us the following information:

- ***course title***
- ***main topics*** such as basic leadership, communication, and conflict
- ***names of the participants*** with brief background information such as country, job title, their roles and length of service with the company
- ***the schedule*** for the week-long program

Based on the given information, as consultants we asked a few questions to clarify her needs and know more about the participants. We also exchanged ideas about the topics and teaching methods, and which modules would be included. Then we sent her the course outline to be finalized. In this process we did not discuss the company’s overall business strategy or goals. We don’t think the company was seriously interested in a good return on their training investment. The company just assumed that training by itself would have a positive impact. Sujin asked us to recommend a book for participants which might be relevant to the topic of the program. We recommended a couple of books and she selected one and gave it to the participants. This book was not used for pre-study

before the session or for follow-up. In her role as a human resource development manager, she was mainly interested in how satisfied the participants were with the session. After the session was complete, participants were asked to fill out an assessment on the spot. We never received the assessment results from the company.

We do not know the impact of the session on the participants or the company.

The following issues should have caused Sujin concern:

- It was not accurately determined what the people being trained needed to know.
- There was a lack of follow-up on behaviors being taught.
- There was only a focus on measuring immediate participant reactions.
- There was no specific pre-work provided.
- There was not enough pre-planning.

Issue 3 - Teaching the wrong courses (or selecting the wrong participants) is an extreme cost and a major driver of poor training.

All learning experiences should be driven by competencies that drive organizational change. All other learning experiences an organization offers are costly. Adequate planning for a training program includes placing the correct people in the learning experience. The wrong participants in a training experience leads to a poor training experience. The following is an example of what happens when the wrong participants attend training experiences:

One of the challenges for HRD staff is to bring in the right people in the organization to a training session. As managing directors of the HRD Center for a leading business group (as chief learning officers), we often noticed that managers who are working in very important functions (e.g., Strategic Planning, the Finance Team, or the Chairman's Office) came up with excuses for why they can't attend the training. A common excuse is that they have tasks to complete on a tight schedule, so they send someone else who is doing a less critical job or who is not busy. But the leader who missed the training was the one who most needed the requisite competencies. When managers don't participate in training, it is because their bosses put a priority on urgent work, not on managers' development. Or managers themselves do not put priority on their development. Top management's consistent strong commitment to training and development is very critical to having the right candidates in a training experience. The following is an example of what happens when the wrong participants attend a training experience:

Get the Right Person in the Training Experience

In the automotive repair and service industry, many parts manufacturers offer technical training to their customers working in independent auto repair shops. The manufacturers do this so that trained automotive techs learn new skills and reinforce their current skills. The hope is that repair shops will purchase more auto parts as a result of training. Part of the sales representative's effectiveness is measured by the number of techs that attend their training sessions. To achieve this goal, the representatives focus on maximizing the number of people attending the training. They do not care whether the session will help the techs, they just want to get people to attend so they have increased training numbers.

The result:

- Many auto techs being placed in the wrong class
- A lot of unnecessary training activities
- Little or no sales increases of parts
- A bunch of upset techs having their time wasted

Issue 4 - Course designers and/or developers have not focused on what really matters in the learning process.

Course designers and/or developers have driven ineffective training by not emphasizing the importance of preparing learners and managers for the learning experience. They have greatly neglected to follow the learners after the learning experience (Grossman & Salas, 2011). A package for both training professionals and line managers which includes monitoring and supporting actions should be created and endorsed by all appropriate levels of management before the actual learning program is developed. Even though line management is primarily responsible for the monitoring and support of workers attending training programs, training professionals must play a key role here as well. This is a challenge for many organizations worldwide. Training materials also must be consistent with the learning objectives that participants must master in order to be able to perform the appropriate post-training behaviors (Tannenbaum, 2002).

Developing Training with Follow-up

Recently we were asked to give a two-hour workshop to a group of international staff engineers based on a previously developed eight-hour program. While we were conducting the workshop, three executives sat at the back as observers. Later we discovered that they were interested in whether they could use this program as pre-departure training for managers who were assigned overseas. They gave positive feedback on our workshop to the HRD staff and managers. A few weeks later another HRD manager from the same company contacted us and asked us to design and conduct another pre-departure workshop for managers. There were over 50 participants and they would be assigned to the US, China, Japan, and other South Asian countries. The entire program would take seven days, and we would conduct an eight-hour session. The topics included basic leadership, intercultural communication, and other topics we covered in the previous training for overseas staff and engineers. The organization put emphasis on participants' roles in managing local staff and organizations. The leader wanted us to spend more time on how to manage cooperation between their local office and headquarters and between senior and junior leaders within their local operation. We were also asked to focus on building skills in how to solve conflict between local staff and international staff.

Based on the information we received, we exchanged ideas and finalized the modules. However, we mostly decided what modules should be included based on our discussion because they felt we were the content experts. They gave us guidelines, but did not want to get involved in the details. We concluded the training session by having participants write an action plan. They were to outline how they could become a better expatriate manager. Each participant was to write three things that they were going to do. We asked them to share these three things with their table group members. When participants announce to others what they are going to do, it often strengthens their commitment to changing their behavior. We suggested they check in with each other and remind each

other by email. The HRD manager and the participants' managers needed to follow-up systematically. But the company was not interested in doing this.

Issue 5 - Impact analysis of training is not understood nor completed in an effective manner.

This issue leads to assumptions that training is being effective even when it probably is not impacting organizational change. If the learning experiences are not making desired changes to operations and results, then they are a waste of resources. All significant training programs must be evaluated after the training to demonstrate the value of the program and its impact on organizational results. Evaluation includes whether the line and HRD managers monitor how their behaviours have been changed and the training's impact on performance. By evaluation we mean answering the following questions:

- Are training graduates applying what they learned appropriately?
- Is this training making a difference for organizational results?

These questions must be answered positively. Evaluation must be more than asking training participants if they liked their training experience or if they felt they learned something. Each of these questions must be followed up by asking the following:

- If the answer to both of the questions is YES, then you must ask: WHY?
- If the answer to the questions is NO, then you must ask WHY NOT?

These answers will help management understand why or why not the training solution is working.

The Sales Force Think Tank

Several years ago, our consulting firm had an engagement with a mid-size motor vehicle parts store company. The company engaged us to determine what was required to improve the performance of their sales force who call upon independent automotive repair and service shops. During our fact-finding phase we accompanied many sales representatives to determine their strengths and to look for opportunities to improve their performance. Based on the time we spent with the sales representatives and reviewing appropriate sales force data, we determined that the representatives needed to significantly improve their pre-call sales planning. This included determining the purpose of each sales call as well as having a better understanding of how their customers earn them a profit. They needed to learn to ask more and better business-centric questions and to increase their closing rates. Based on our interviews with these representatives, we saw their performance gaps as a competency issue. Therefore, we recommended a training solution.

*After presenting our findings to company management, we agreed to conduct a two-day off-site sales program, The Sales Force Think Tank. The learning objectives were based on our findings. The sales program went well, and participants indicated that they liked what they heard, felt that what they learned was relevant, and because the program design included several role plays and breakout sessions they were engaged. Participants indicated on their evaluation form that they learned several concepts and skills - things they were going to apply. The participants seemed to learn what they needed based on their role play performance and how well they answered our questions throughout the program. The participants, company management, and those who developed the program felt good and believed improvement would occur. But there was **NO** improvement in sales*

or profitability. A year after the program was completed we were asked to determine why there were no gains in sales and other key sales productivity data. When we accompanied several sales representatives on their calls, we noticed many had slipped back into their pre-training habits. After the company invested significant amounts to improve their sales and profitability, they had nothing to show for this except for the two days the sales reps spent enjoying themselves in nonhelpful training.

*What happened? Why did this program fail? Management was involved with setting the learning objectives. However, there were no conversations with management about what the sales representative must do following the training or what the direct managers of these representatives had to do to monitor post-training behavior and to provide support for their representatives. There were no key short term metrics agreed upon prior to the Sales Force Think Tank program development that would let management know along the way if their representatives were correctly applying what they learned. **No monitoring occurred by company/client management of the sales force until we were asked to do so after the fact.***

As mentioned earlier, learning application to the job has been an important concern for over 40 years (Grossman & Salas, 2011; Patel, 2010; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Thayer & Teachout, 1995). In reality, however, training professionals and management are mostly interested in measuring to what extent participants liked the training and learned skills (Kirkpatrick's Level 1 and 2), not in behavior change on the job and impact on the organization's performance (Kirkpatrick's Level 3 and 4). This is still a major cause of ineffective training.

Issue 6 - Lack of support from key managers for a training program prior to the program and following the program.

Our research indicates that too often managers could not care less about the training their employees are receiving. They are either not in favor of the training at any time or are indifferent to it. Without support, the training is destined to be unhelpful. Trainers and senior leaders must garner the support of all organizational members for training to be an effective method of change.

Online Counter Sales Training

The senior management of a motor vehicle store chain was concerned that their counter people were not asking their walk-in customers for additional sales. The Vice President of Store Operations asked their training manager to find an online program that would show counter people how to ask for additional business. The Vice President insisted on an online program so that the counter people could take the course at the store without losing time traveling to and from off-site training. After finding an online course that met the Vice President's requirements, the training manager advised the counter people that the course was available and that all of them should take it within the next 30 days. Store and regional managers were also notified. However, this was the first they had heard about the online retail sales training class. They had no opportunity to give input or choose which counter people should attend. Before the course, no managers were involved with their counter people concerning the topic of add-on sales, and after the course, very few store managers even asked their employees how the online additional selling class had gone. Senior management liked the online course because it had a test at the end. Most of the counter people liked it because it contained a lot of humor although a few thought this class was too basic. Overall, the post-test results were good,

and most participant evaluations had very positive comments indicating they enjoyed the class and thought they learned a lot.

*Three months later, management noted that there was **no** increase in the number of line items purchased per invoice, and no increase in business. What happened? Why were the results so disappointing? Was the training program a waste of time and money? The answer is more about what did not happen. As mentioned, the training manager did not involve the store and regional managers upfront nor post-training to discuss what their counter people should do after training to increase their add-on sales. Their counter people did not know what they should be doing differently as a result of the training. There were no metrics that were tied to this training program such as number of items per invoice and sales increases. There was no follow-up plan after the training to ensure compliance was developed. Store managers did not monitor, reinforce, or provide encouragement to their counter people to insure they were applying what they learned. There was no support from training and other HRD professionals. These professionals believed that after training took place, they were through. As far as they were concerned, their job was done. **All that happened was that the counter people participated in a fun but ineffective training program.***

Computer-based learning is becoming more popular than classroom because it is more affordable, accessible, and convenient (Christensen et al., 2008). However, sometimes it is a challenge for course designers to develop an effective training program because of diverse training needs (Salas et al., 2012). In the case of Online Counter Sales Training, there was no input from trainees in the training needs analysis stage (Baldwin et al., 1991) and no clear expected learning outcomes. There was also not much support from line managers and training professionals, and no follow-up plan. All these factors lowered participants' motivation to learn and apply the training to their jobs.

Issue 7 - Developing and executing a training program when a training solution is not needed and will not enhance the organization's needs.

Training is a wonderful way to help people be more effective. However, there are often other exceptional interventions that will lead to meeting an organization's needs. This is why a well-conducted training needs analysis is critical to determine whether a training solution is needed (Salas et al., 2012). Doing training when it is not needed and when it will not bring about change is the ultimate misuse of training. Unfortunately, management's immediate reaction when their training graduates indicate they learned new skills but are not using them correctly is to send the participants back for retraining. Yet, often the problem is one of lack of compliance, not lack of competency. The solution is not retraining. The solution demands other management interventions such as coaching and/or improved job aids.

8. When Training is Not the Solution

Let us return to the retail/wholesale chain of stores example discussed in Issue 1. We noted that a year after this chain's sales opportunity tracking system was installed and the sales force was trained, there was no increase in sales. We saw that management did not ensure that the sales team was correctly applying what they learned or using the new system. Management did not determine why this was happening. They just asked our consultancy to provide more intensive sales training to address why the new sales opportunity tracking system needed to be used. They believed that reinforcing how to use the system correctly would increase sales. At the time, from what we saw, we agreed.

*The sales team members with the lowest sales were required to attend the remedial retraining seminar. At this two-day off-site program, we determined that their non-application was not due to lack of knowledge or lack of skills. Our client had a compliance and an indifference problem. The members of the sales force who attended were not even attempting to use the sales system. They just did not want to use it. Management was not monitoring the system usage. The sales vice president delivered conflicting messages regarding its use. **This is an example of using a training solution when training was not necessary.***

The examples shared above, and others, show that these seven issues are real and prevalent in the training and development industry. The issues lead to a significant amount of wasted organizational resources resulting in ineffective spending, and loss of funds that could be used more appropriately. As we pointed out earlier, this is why many companies are suspicious about the effectiveness of training. Bock (2015) advises to not invest in bad training.

9. Our Point of View: Many Current Training Practices Do Not Work!

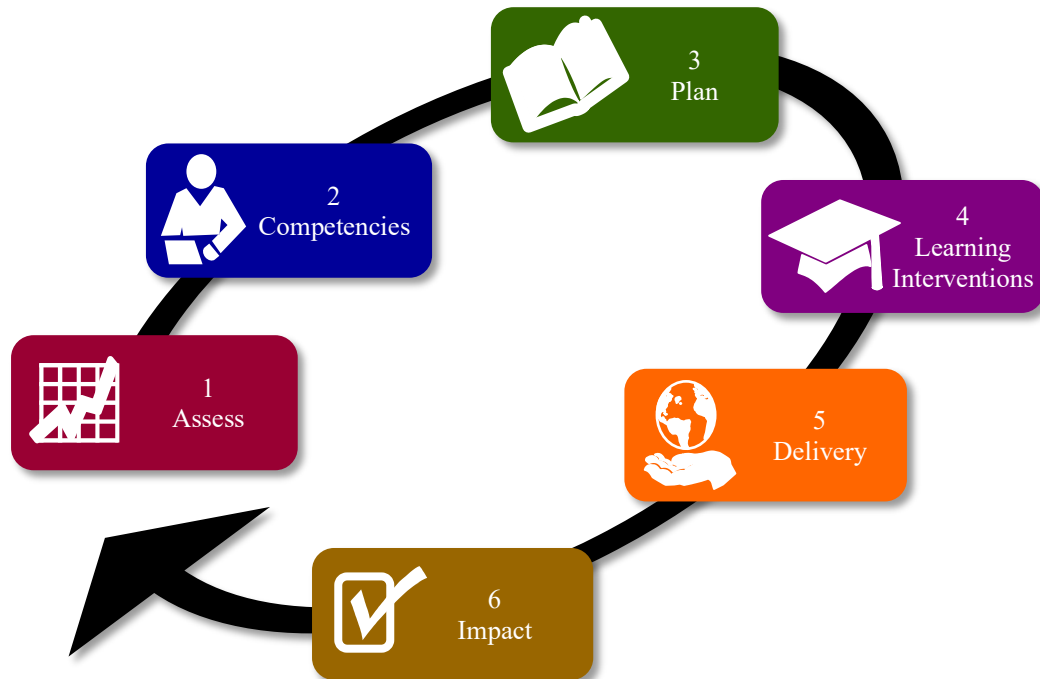
Training and learning experiences do not always transfer back to the workplace. Over the years instructional designers have focused on creating wonderful ways to teach learners in the classroom and to get learners to love the learning experience. One result of this has been that trainees have received great scores on evaluation sheets. Learners have responded that they have enjoyed the experience, believed the material learned was relevant, and felt engaged. But per Brinkerhoff (2006), if nothing else is done, especially post-training, then only 15% of the training would be transferred to work.

However, instructional designers have done little more than pay lip service to what causes trainees to use what they learn back at work. Our research over the years indicates that only 25% of real learning transfer happens in the classroom experience, while 100% of the focus of instructional designers is on that very classroom experience. Peterson-Song-Udell (PSU) applies this process to measure all of our own learning and change interventions as well as those of many other learning companies. As each training experience is slightly different, we apply and tailor the evaluation to fit the measurement needs of the learning experience. PSU research suggests that organizations that measure impact are more successful at attaining their organizational goals. Failure to measure the impact of actual learning and behavioural change leads to a waste of training resources and there will be no positive impact in terms of changing performance. (Bock, 2015). In addition, PSU studies have discovered that organizations that focus on pre-learning experience preparation, coordination with appropriate management, and post-training learner applications generate higher returns on learning and change investment (Salas et al., 2012).

10. The PSU (Peterson, Song, Udell) Training Models

Over many years of research and experience we have developed two training models that review the paths to eliminate unsustainable training: 1. *The Organizational Talent Development Framework* and 2. *The 4E Training Design Model*. Our first model, *The Organizational Talent Development Framework* consists of six specific, focused paths that lead to the elimination of ineffective training.

10.1. The Organizational Talent Development Framework™



These six paths provide ways to aid business leaders, senior executives, line management, first level managers, and training professionals to be able to challenge the seven issues leading to ineffective training and become much more effective.

Path 1 - Assess organizational results - Assess and align learning and performance with organizational results. You should ask: What does the organization need to achieve or improve operationally as well as to improve their total training system? For example, increased sales, reduced cycle time, lower employee turnover, or increased customer service.

Path 2 - Select *competencies* that drive organizational results - Select and determine which competencies will impact organizational results. You should ask: What must employees know, do, and be to achieve desired organizational results? For example, planning skills, communication, analytical skills, problem solving, and managing performance. You should also determine whether a training solution is appropriate. For example, individual coaching or system change might be a better approach.

Path 3 – If a training solution is warranted, **plan** for the learning interventions to develop real competencies. Planning should include determining what impact the training will have on the participants and the organization. You should ask: What will success look like? What performance variables, metrics, and measurements will be impacted and how? To ensure success, what must management and training professionals do prior to learning and after learning to ensure success? What do you want trainees to be able to do and/or stop doing? What courses and programs should be offered to improve competencies and organizational results?

Path 4 - Design and select **learning interventions** and the appropriate participants - Create and promote practical learning experiences that ensure training is executed so it impacts results. You should ask: To

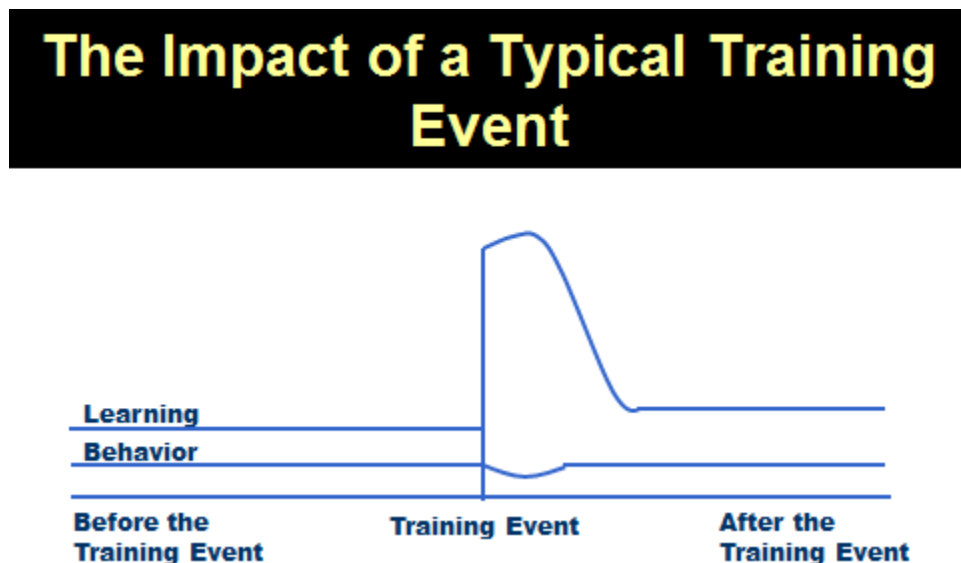
improve specific performance metrics, what learning approaches should be included? If the learning objective is to improve a salesperson's closing rates, how should the skills to do this be taught?

Path 5 - Mix and blend learning *delivery* and conduct the learning event - Implement learning and change experiences using efficient and blended approaches. You should ask: Which delivery methods best support the required learning or change? For example, you should determine whether to use face-to-face, online, or blended learning delivery approaches according to the learner's needs.

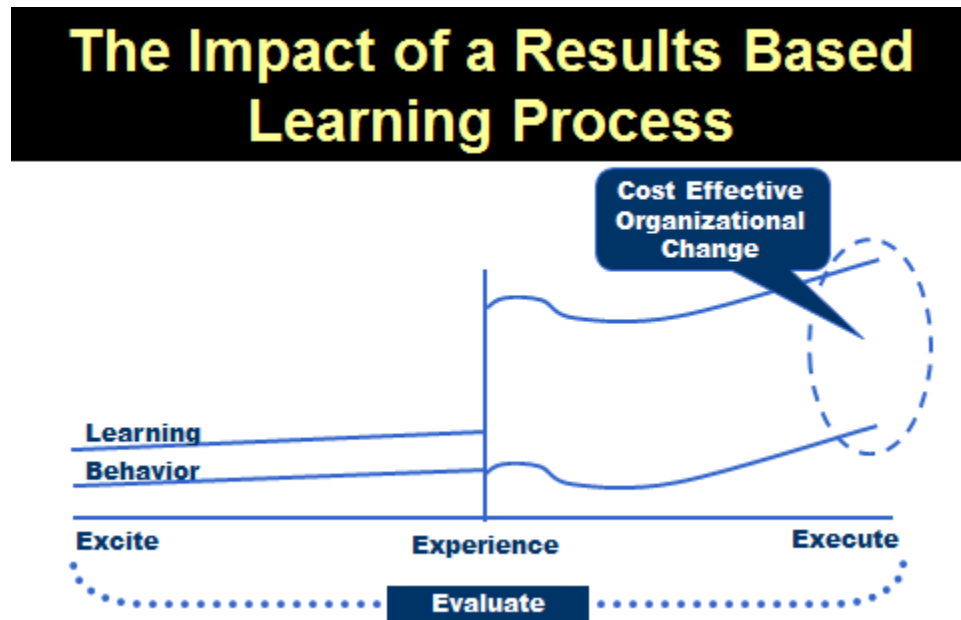
Path 6 - Assess the *impact* of learning and performance – Measure learning and change efforts to ensure their impact is delivering organizational results. You should ask: Did the learning and change positively impact competencies and organizational results? If so, how? If not, why not? Both quantitative and qualitative data must show if there was a positive impact or not. For example, if the goal of a performance improvement learning event was to improve sales call planning, what data can be shown? Quantitative data could include sales closing rates and an example of qualitative data could be quotes from sales management.

11. The 4E Training Design Model™

The six paths to performance improvement and the attainment of organizational results require an understanding of the 4E Training Design Model. This model guides the strategic learning and design process for organizing learning efforts that maximize organizational results. The model focuses primarily on increasing the effectiveness and performance capability of people through training experiences. It is a specific learning process designed to develop and promote knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The following chart indicates the impact of a typical training experience on the learning and behavior of organizational participants. This chart reflects the combined results of hundreds of published learning and change studies. It illustrates that behavior and learning are both influenced by training experiences. However, after about two weeks, participant behavior goes back to where it was prior to the training experience and much of the information learned has been forgotten (Georgenson, 1982; Fitzpatrick, 2001; Saks 2002; Burke & Hutchins, 2007).



The following diagram illustrates the impact of a training experience that uses the 4E Training Design Model.



PSU discovered that the way people learn is directly related to the way they are taught in training experiences and supported by their managers post-training. The 4E Training Design Model reflects what is crucial for the learning experience to establish change. During numerous impact analysis studies conducted by PSU, we focused on determining which of four phases contributed most to the return on expectations and investment of learning and change. The four phases were: pre-work (**Excite**), workshops/learning interventions (**Experience**), follow-up support (**Execute**), and evaluation. The following are the average responses from our research covering approximately 3000 different courses. PSU research indicates that the impact of a learning or change intervention is determined by all four phases. These percentages represent the contribution made to the impact and return on expectations and investment of each of the 4Es. Note that the evaluation phase happens within the other three “E” phases. Therefore, its contribution to return on expectations and investment is included in the other three phases. The percentages represent the impact each of the first three phases has on an organization’s desired learning results.



11.1. The Excite Phase

Our research indicates that if an organization does not properly use the Excite phase, they can lose as much as 25% of the impact of their learning intervention. This phase helps focus the efforts of people in a training experience on what they are about to experience and how this experience will help improve their performance. The Excite phase gets a person ready for maximum learning in the phases that follow. One of many good Excite phase approaches to a pre-learning event is a meeting with the training staff and management. At this meeting, training professionals should share what the managers of people being trained should do before and after the training event.

11.2. The Experience Phase

The Experience phase (the actual learning event) influences only about 25% of the learning impact regardless of whether the event is instructor-led, online, or a blended learning experience. This phase is where the learners come together in a social situation such as a classroom or where learners sit alone in front of a computer, etc.

11.3. The Execute Phase

The most important phase of the process is the Execute phase. What an organization does to enhance learning following the Experience phase is crucial in the learning process. 50% of the impact of a training experience comes from activities that are developed to be used after the actual learning event is complete. This is the most important phase, but it receives the least amount of attention. It focuses on personal application to the work environment with effective implementation of knowledge and skills. One

of many good practices is managers monitoring and providing support to staff who have been trained to ensure that they are successfully using the skills they have learned.

11.4. The Evaluate Phase

The Evaluate phase helps determine the impact of the training experience and leads to refinements in performance improvement experiences that will produce the greatest impact. We suggest that evaluation is a continuous process that takes place throughout each of the first three phases including establishing specifically what will be evaluated to ensure that the skills have been learned and have been successfully taught to attain the desired result.

12. How the PSU Models Are Different from Others

There are two popular models for training evaluation: the Kirkpatrick model and the Phillips model. The Kirkpatrick Model originally developed by Don Kirkpatrick is an outstanding approach that is designed to analyze and evaluate the results of training programs. It takes into account any style of training, both informal or formal, in person or online to determine aptitude based on four levels. In 2010, Kirkpatrick's son and daughter-in-law, Jim and Wendy Kirkpatrick expanded on the model and developed the New World Kirkpatrick Learning Model. This new model enables all levels of management to determine if the training program they invested in improves performance and helps to ensure that it is sustainable. According to the Kirkpatricks (2016), the most practical way to demonstrate the value of an employee training program is to focus on "return on expectations" (ROE). To help determine ROE, they developed four levels of evaluation which are:

- Level 4 which measures the desired results as well as leading indicators, which are short term observations and measurements that would suggest post-training behaviors are on track to create a positive impact on desired results.
- Level 3 which determines if trainees are using what they learned when they are back on the job. Management plays a key role here through required drivers which are systems that monitor, reinforce, encourage, and reward the appropriate post-training behavior.
- Level 2 answers the question: did trainees learn so that they can apply the appropriate post-training behavior back on the job? Did they master the intended knowledge, skills, attitude, confidence, and commitment based on their participation in the training?
- Level 1 is all about participant reactions. Did participants find their training favourable, engaging, and relevant to their jobs?

The other popular model is the Phillips model. Jack and Patricia Phillips' model (2016) takes a learning program's business impact at Kirkpatrick's Level 4 and translates that impact into monetary terms which are compared to the total cost of the program to calculate return on investment (ROI) or, as Phillips refers to it, as Level 5. The costs include program development and delivery, plus the labour costs of the time it takes learners to complete the training. As well, the program impact relates to improved performance as a result of the learning program.

How are our models different from the above? Both of the models are excellent as they focus on measurement, as our models do. However, our models address identifying the performance gap and its causes, competencies, delivery, and instructional design. We also answer the question – is a training solution appropriate and if not, why not? Our research suggests that organizations that measure impact are more successful at attaining their organizational goals. Organizations that measure their learning efforts generate higher returns on their learning and change investment. Analysis helps organizations discover

how to align people and strategy for the best learning results. Analysis helps determine if learning and change efforts are effective and leads directly to results the organization wants and expects.

13. Conclusion

Learning and change interventions that do not include a major focus on the Excite and Execute phases rarely measure the highest positive impact scores. In sum, understanding the 4E Training Design Model is crucial in both developing and/or purchasing training experiences. If the Excite and Execute phases are not included in a learning experience, the learning experience loses 75% of its potential impact. Organizations should not invest in courses that just focus on the Experience phase. Salas et al (2012) also suggest that training professionals and managers should ask “What are we going to do before and after this training to ensure trainees can and will use what they have learned?” How do the workshops you teach measure up to the 4E Training Design Model? We hope this paper has helped you begin to understand the problem of ineffective training and its significant costs. It must be eliminated, and effective training must take its place to grow organizations and for them to achieve the results they demand. We believe the *Six Paths* will help training professionals and managers develop real innovative training, not fake training, that will make real differences to performance.

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