



Getting Value From Training - Get Some ROI (Return On Investment)



All too often, potential benefits from training seminars are lost because the supports required for the application of learning are absent. And let's face it -- nobody can afford to send people for training just for the fun of it. We all expect that training will somehow impact upon a person's present or future ability to contribute to the employing organization. How do we "make it so"? That's our topic this month.

General Principles

Getting value from training isn't magical. There are some general principles that you can adapt to ensure that training for yourself and your staff results in changes in the workplace. First, training that adds value tends to be integrated with other management systems. That is, training decisions and actions are carried out with reference to performance management systems, strategic planning processes, and career development initiatives. Training must be managed so that it is planned, and deliberately and clearly linked to workplace outcomes. When training

is used as a reward, or its goals aren't clear to all concerned, it is rare that it has any positive impact.

Second, training that adds value actually has three components. First there is the training planning component. Then training occurs. Most important is the third component -- follow-up. Mechanisms must be in place to provide reinforcement to the learner for his or her efforts to implement what has been learned.

Finally, training that adds value occurs when there is an infrastructure in place that supports the learner's application of what has been learned. For example, if people attend a workshop on the use of a computer-based word processor, training will only add value if the software and hardware is available and in place when the person returns from training. While we normally think of infrastructure as relating to things, it can also refer to elements like time. For example, people attending a seminar on the use of effective management techniques will only be able to use what has been

learned if they have sufficient time to do so. So, getting value from training requires integration, planning, follow-up and infrastructure. While getting value should be a shared responsibility on the part of attendee (s) and manager, the manager plays a critical role in helping to create the conditions under which training will add value.

Value Added Actions

Identify Development Needs

On a regular basis identify development needs of staff. Use your performance management system and your strategic planning processes to integrate HR development with the needs of the organization and each individual. Training will be most likely to add value when the needs of the individual and the organization coincide.

Contract With Attendees

Use an informal contracting process to define your expectations and those of training attendees. The training contract should include:

- how you expect the training attendee to apply what he/she has learned.



- how the trainee is expected to share what has been learned with other members of the organization.

- what the trainee needs from you so that learning can be applied.

when you will meet with the attendee to debrief/discuss the training and how it can be applied to your workplace.

Assess Infrastructure

Prior to training, make sure that the infrastructure is in place so that trainees will be able to apply what they have learned as soon as they return to the workplace.

A good question to ask: *"Is there anything that will impede the person's ability to apply what has been learned?"*.

After training, ask this question again.

Ensure Training Is Appropriate



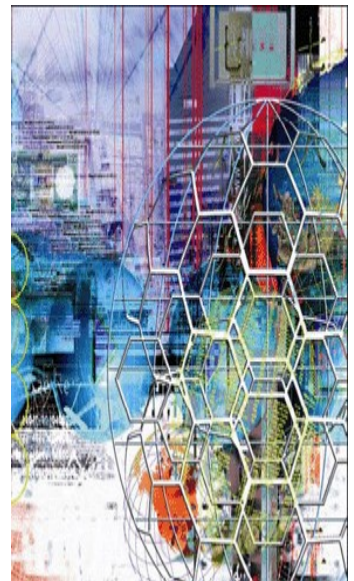
Training tends to add value when it is the solution to a problem. Not all problems can be solved through training, so be alert to the possibility that other solutions may be appropriate.

Remember that training can help people learn skills, but is less effective at changing attitudes, and will likely have no effect if the problem is related to other factors in the workplace.

Conclusion

All too often, managers do not take an active role in the decision-making and follow-up necessary to allow training to add value to the organization. As a result, resources may be wasted, and frustration can result.

Keep in mind that managers need to work with training attendees before and after training so that the training will make a difference.



Training must be linked to both individual and organizational needs, and barriers to application of learning must be removed. Often the manager makes the difference between training that is just a "vacation", and training that really brings about anticipated benefits.

Source: Robert Bacal