



More Than Hoping for Miracles

Training Transfer that Leads to Behavior Change

Where do many organizations routinely invest hundreds of thousands of dollars, yet fail to create a positive return on investment? The answer is **training**.

Many organizations don't treat training as an investment. Managers typically assume that the benefits of training will be manifested in employees' performance - at some point.

On average, only 20% of employees transfer training to their jobs. Companies are measuring ROI on a handful of participants.

"If you don't create favorable conditions for a positive ROI, a good part of learning is wasted," says Marc Lalande, Director of Learning GPS, former Head of Training at Berlex Canada. "On average, only 20% of participants 'get it', and actually transfer the training to the job.

Imagine if you could double, triple or quadruple the results of training? It would be a dream come true for any CEO or CFO. Not planning for learning transfer is almost like hoping for miracles from your training."

Evaluating the need for training

"A training program isn't always the answer," says Shelley Brown, President of Bromelin People Practices, and former VP Human Resources, Novartis Pharmaceuticals Canada. "Consider self directed learning activities, stretch assignments, and other types of learning. Also take into account employee's individual learning styles if you want to maximize the transfer of learning to job performance."

It's vital to remember that a training workshop can only address two things: knowledge and skills.

Training is not the answer if employees don't have the right equipment, don't know what the performance standards are, don't get feedback, or don't have the physical, mental or intellectual capacity to do the job. Teaching them knowledge and skills won't



produce the outcomes you are looking for. Be sure that a workshop to improve knowledge or skills is the answer, and not a band-aid solution.

“Most of the time, management comes to the training department with a pre-conceived idea of the problems, and what needs to be done. The training department often behaves as a order taker, creating all kinds of well-intentioned initiatives that are severely limited. Most trainers have excellent product knowledge, but if the needs analysis is poor, the relevance is impaired and it limits the long-term impact of the training,” says Marc Lalande.

“To transfer learning, it’s vital to understand the performance requirements, and to actively involve the sales management team in supporting and reinforcing the application of this learning,” Lalande explains.

Barriers to training transfer

Managers have to actively support and reinforce the application of learning.

Training transfer can be low for many reasons, including:

- Lack of workplace standards
- Low learner motivation
- Lack of reinforcement on the job
- Environmental constraints such as lack of resources or time
- Non-supportive organizational culture
- Perception of content as irrelevant
- Employee’s discomfort with change
- Pressure from peers to resist change
- Lack of accountability

Key roles in training transfer

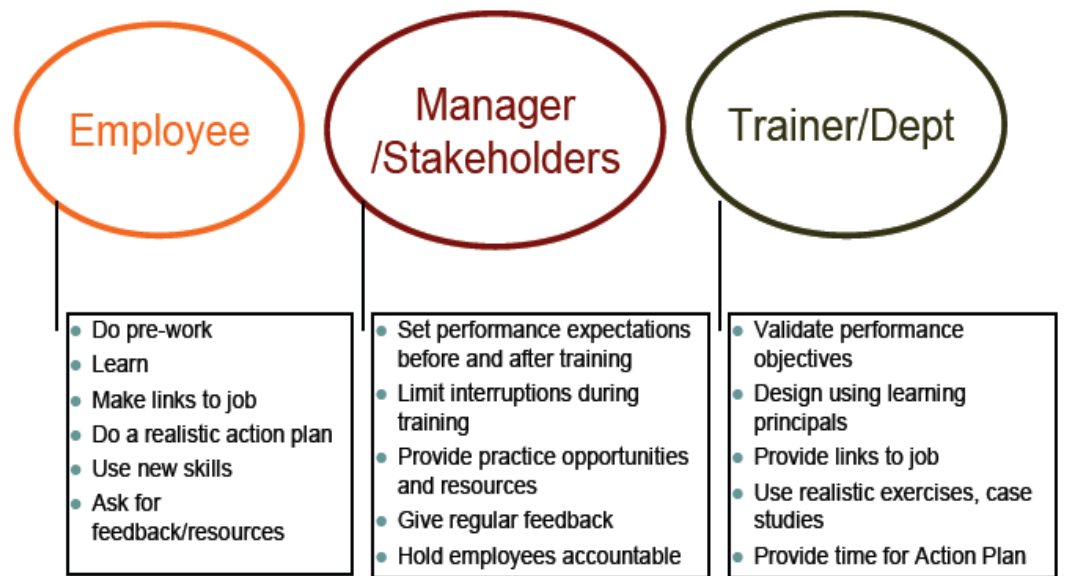
A training program’s success depends on three things:

- Meeting the learners’ needs
- The learners’ willingness to learn
- Support from supervisors before and after the workshop

The key roles in learning include the employee, the managers or stakeholders, and the training department. Each has their own part to play in achieving a full return on investment.



Key roles in learning:



Manager support and buy-in is crucial. The manager can directly influence the employee's motivation to transfer learning by controlling environmental factors, and providing immediate feedback on the employee's performance.

Employees, managers and the training department all play a role in the transfer of learning.

Before the training, managers can:

- Make the link between the training and the job
- Stress the importance of doing the pre-work
- Make learning transfer a prerequisite to training
- Design a peer-coaching component
- Tell participants they will be tested at the end of the training and on the job as well

During the training, managers can:

- Attend the training to demonstrate strong support for the workshop
- Create the right mindset for learning by telling employees about the value of the learning
- Help participants develop ways to overcome barriers
- Encourage employees to develop action plans



After the training, managers can:

- Follow up by emailing learning nuggets
- Provide additional resources such as eBooks and job aids
- Build a community of practice
- Offer incentives or rewards
- Assign graduates of the program as mentors
- Reward and recognize employees who successfully complete and apply the training
- Show patience for the learning curve as employees begin to implement what they learned

Managers should ensure that training isn't hit or miss by aligning the programs' learning objectives with the employee's development plan.

Strategies to ensure transfer of learning

"Plan your training. Don't take a hit or miss approach. Ensuring the transfer of training sends the right message to employees," says Shelley Brown, President of Bromelin People Practices.

Brown suggests these steps:

1. Ensure that every employee has a specific development plan for the next fiscal year. The plans should be specifically related to the requirements of the job and address performance gaps, or be related to the employee's next role.
2. Managers should meet regularly with employees to make sure they are committed to achieving all the actions outlined in their plans.
3. Two weeks before the training, the manager and employee should sit down and go over the outline of the training. They should discuss how the content is applicable to their job, and develop up to 3 SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) learning objectives specific to that employee. This ensures accountability, and gives the employee a specific focus while attending the training.
4. The employee should maximize benefits by reading all the resource materials, networking with other attendees at the training, and taking advantage of any individual coaching or follow up that is offered afterwards— something few employees do.
5. Within two workdays after the program, the manager should debrief the employee and assess if the learning objectives were



met. Employees should then commit to the new skills they will integrate into the job.

6. Thirty days after the training, during the regular one-on-one meeting, the manager should give the employee feedback on the evidence and results of the new skill implementation. The employee must be held accountable to complete the development plan.

To get a return on investment, managers must create fertile ground for the learning to take place, and follow up to ensure that skills are transferred to the job.

Bottom line

Training is an investment, and the transfer of learning is the return on investment. Managers must create fertile ground for learning, and support employees before, during and after the training to ensure the transfer of skills and knowledge to the job.

Increase your training transfer

Get the most out of your investment in your most valuable asset - your people. Bromelin People Practices can help you transfer learning strategies to accelerate the development of your high potential employees, management and executives.

Shelley Brown, President of Bromelin People Practices, has held Human Resources executive roles. She has deep expertise in talent management, creating mentoring program and succession planning. Call Bromelin People Practices: 514.428.8877 email: Shelley.brown@bromelin.ca www.bromelin.ca

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Lynda Goldman is a copywriter specializing in white papers and case studies for the training industry and Human Resources. The author of 31 business and educational books, she has written and facilitated training programs for many companies, from Abbott Laboratories to London Life Insurance.

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