

APPLYING THE KIRKPATRICK MODEL TO A COACHING PROGRAM

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The ultimate goal of training is to make important contributions to organisational strategic initiatives. To meet this goal and realise the full potential of their training programs training professionals must become true strategic business partners.

In the previous article, Jim and Wendy Kirkpatrick explained how to do this practically and economically. In this article, we explain how IHC, a large not-for-profit organisation, is applying the Kirkpatrick Model to maximise the value from a Coaching Skills program supporting a strategic initiative called EPiC (a performance development framework that the organisation is introducing). IHC employs 6000 people to support 4500 service users in the intellectual disability sector.

Over the past year, IHC has piloted and begun the full rollout of a coaching skills program for its Area Managers and Service Managers (Frontline Managers) in order to provide better support to staff working with service users.

IHC worked with GMD Partnerships to design, develop and implement a program that involved partnering with the organisation to create maximum value, while maintaining a clear view of the necessity of being able to evaluate and so demonstrate that value.

Here are practical steps for creating a powerful post-training implementation and evaluation plan, along with examples of how IHC and GMD Partnerships implemented each step.

Begin with the end in mind

IHC's mission is to provide support for people with an intellectual disability so that they can lead full and satisfying lives in their communities.

The Kirkpatrick Level 4 result for an organisation reflects what the organisation exists to do and so is consistent and never changes. IHC's mission served as the basis of the Kirkpatrick Level 4 result.

We also identified Kirkpatrick Level 4 Leading Indicators. Leading indicators are short and medium term measures

(checkpoints) along the way to achieving the Level 4 result; these vary with each training program.

Two Leading Indicators for this program (out of 8 identified) are:

- Service managers are holding coaching conversations with staff as and when required
- Service users are achieving personal goals with staff's support

Next, IHC identified the coaching behaviours that Area Managers and Service Managers would engage in daily to contribute to that Level 4 result. Examples of those behaviours (Kirkpatrick Level 3), which align closely to the EPiC strategic initiative:

- Hold regular and meaningful conversations with staff, as and when required, and use coaching tools and techniques in these conversations
- Provide positive feedback, as and when required, for performance over and above what's expected

Note that the coaching behaviours are both observable and measurable.

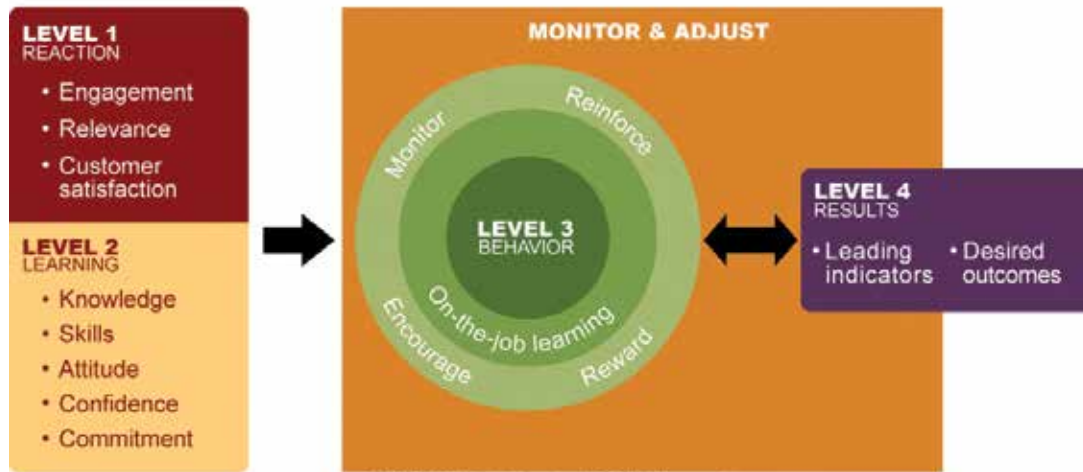
With a clear Kirkpatrick Level 4 target, Leading Indicators and the required coaching behaviours identified, only then did work begin on developing learning objectives and designing the training program.

Build post-training activities during program design

Robert O. Brinkerhoff's research indicated that only one in seven Coaching Skills participants will actively apply on the job what is learned during training if it is not reinforced and monitored. Applying the Kirkpatrick Model helped the organisation to understand what practical post-training activities would support Coaching Skills on the job; these insights were then built into the program.

The program was designed as a series of coordinated activities, of which the Coaching Skills training workshop was just one event. Pre-workshop briefings, scheduled post-workshop catch-ups at 7, 30, 60, 90 and 120 days, and use of job aids are fundamental parts of the

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program. Technology is used to facilitate these catch-ups, such as through web-based meetings.

Explain performance expectations to learners

Area Managers and Service Managers have busy jobs with multiple demands on their time and frequently changing priorities. To set them up for success, the following actions are part of the program:

1. Briefing General Managers and Area Managers on the program so that they understand how Area Managers and Service Managers are to coach and their role in monitoring and reinforcing the coaching.
2. Briefing Service Managers so that they know what's expected of them on the job and how the program will help them meet expectations.
3. Implementing an Action Planning Diary for participants to use through each step of the program.
4. Introducing all job aids in the workshop training and allowing ample time to practise using them.
5. Discussing with participants their confidence in and commitment to using the coaching skills, and then identifying and addressing any potential roadblocks.

Monitor findings and make adjustments

Monitoring on-the-job coaching performance and making subsequent adjustments to future programs has been critical to success so far. Thorough evaluations of pilot coaching programs were undertaken to determine what helped on-the-job performance and what hindered it. This included face-to-face program debriefs held with pilot participants, which provided valuable, actionable intelligence that could not be gathered from a survey.

These findings have led to more effort spent on preparing and briefing stakeholders and participants, Area Managers taking a more active lead on coaching implementation and a general refinement of the program. These adjustments have led to a shift in where time, effort and costs are incurred, bringing a reduction in 'training' costs (compared to pilot programs) but requiring more time and involvement from IHC leaders.

Next steps

This program has a robust training implementation and evaluation plan in place. There is a clear line of sight from the training program, to expected on-

the-job performance, to how coaching of staff members will in turn support service users to lead fulfilling lives in their communities.

Whilst still in the national roll-out phase, there are early Leading Indicators at Kirkpatrick Level 4 that this program is on track to support IHC's mission. Continuous monitoring and adjusting will be critical to maximising the value from the Coaching Skills program.

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