TACTICAL TRAINING

The aim of training is to obtain better organisational results, yet this often doesn't happen. David Dewhurst and Mark Harris provide some tips to help create real value.

I remember clearly leaving a training programme a few years ago thinking how much I had enjoyed the training and looking forward to using the learning on the job. But a while later, I remember being so disappointed as I reflected on how little I had managed to use in my daily work. Lack of opportunity, conflict with my manager's views and my own workload had all contributed to me not applying what I had learned. I wonder how many of us have been in this situation?

The purpose of training is to obtain better organisational results, yet in the majority of instances, according to Professor Robert Brinkerhoff (*Telling Training's Story*) up to 85 percent of participants fail to do what we need to get those results.

In this article, we identify the key challenges any training faces and provide some tips to overcome them and create real value for the organisation.

KEY CHALLENGES

'We need training'.

So often, we hear managers identify a problem and say "we need to train our people" to fix the problem. This poses two professional challenges for those expected to procure training or to design and deliver the training:

- *Problem #1:* We know that if we deliver the standalone training, it's highly unlikely that the training alone will fix the problem—partly because training on its own does not lead to a change in on-the-job performance.
- *Problem #2:* The 'problem' is often a symptom of something deeper and if we do not address the deeper issue first, then the training will have been a waste of resource.

Training needs to be cost efficient.

Operational requirements and financial demands in the organisation often mean that we end up with training solutions that are far from effective. So many times, we have seen e-learning packages that are efficient at giving the knowledge, but are left wanting at helping the learner to retain that knowledge, use it on the job or help them develop their skills.

Losing sight of how the training subsequently affected job performance or organisational impact.

The training has been delivered and we expect it to fix the 'problem'. How do we know whether the problem has been fixed and to what degree the training contributed to fixing (or otherwise) the problem? Short answer, we often don't—because we change focus to the next organisational issue or because we are not close to those employees and managers who have been working through the issue.

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES

Work with stakeholders at a strategic level.

Before even contemplating training, identify the root cause of the problem and understand the role that job performance has to play in that problem. Ask the questions:

- What will success look like for the organisation if we address the problem's root cause(s). Which organisational metrics will show improvement and when?
- If we are starting to turn around performance, what will we see happening in the organisation to tell us we are on our way?
- Apart from lifting job performance, what else needs to change if we are to solve the problem long term?

Identify the critical behaviours that we want employees to perform.

These are the few vital and specific behaviours employees must perform on the job if they are going to fully contribute to resolving the problem or opportunity. They can be hard to express succinctly. A good question to ask your stakeholders here is:

- If the employee was performing the job well and we were to video them, what would we see them doing when we played the video back?

Develop a training solution package.

The key word here is package. We know that training alone will not help someone perform the vital few critical behaviours on the job. Research, and indeed your own experience, may well tell you that most training fails to realise its full potential (in terms of on-the-job performance and impact on organisational results) because 'stuff' gets in the way when we return to the job. This means that substantial effort and resource must go into:

- Preparing the learner for training (the amount of effort and resource required here is the same as goes into the training itself, according to studies by Professor Robert Brinkerhoff);
- A comprehensive performance support and accountability package after training that facilitates further on-the-job learning and encourages, reinforces and rewards the performance of those critical behaviours on the job. According to Brinkerhoff, the amount of effort and resource that's needed will be twice that of the training itself;
- A variety of tools here are going to be required to meet the various needs and learning styles of those being trained, so consider a range of job aids, checklists, coaching and mentoring;

- Dr Jim Kirkpatrick, an expert in training evaluation, often reminds learning and development professionals "Training alone will cause about 15 percent of the people to do what they learned to do. For the rest, you are battling human nature. Most people need support and accountability on the job to adopt new behaviours."

The following true story illustrates this: We worked with an organisation to roll out a coaching skills programme for its frontline leaders. The programme was well aligned with a key organisational KPI. Besides the training workshop itself, there was emphasis placed on the frontline leader being prepared before attending the workshop and also on the on-the-job performance support package following the training.

Part of the package involved us meeting with the programme participants to check on progress. In one meeting, I was struck by how Paula, a frontline leader, was describing how she was using the coaching tools and techniques on the job and the impact she was having. It was clear from what she said (and confirmed by her manager and colleagues) that Paula would have passed the video test in terms of performing the coaching skills on the job.

So far so good … only Paula had not been able to attend the coaching workshop. So I was keen to understand how she was doing so well coaching on the job, without having attended the training. She explained it was partly because she had completed the pre-work, but mainly it was from observing her colleagues back on the job, asking them to explain the coaching techniques job aid they'd been given and also from the role modelling she'd experienced from her own manager.

All credit to Paula, she is naturally a good listener, so that has certainly helped her. Nonetheless the on-the-job performance support package we put in place was the key to her coaching success.

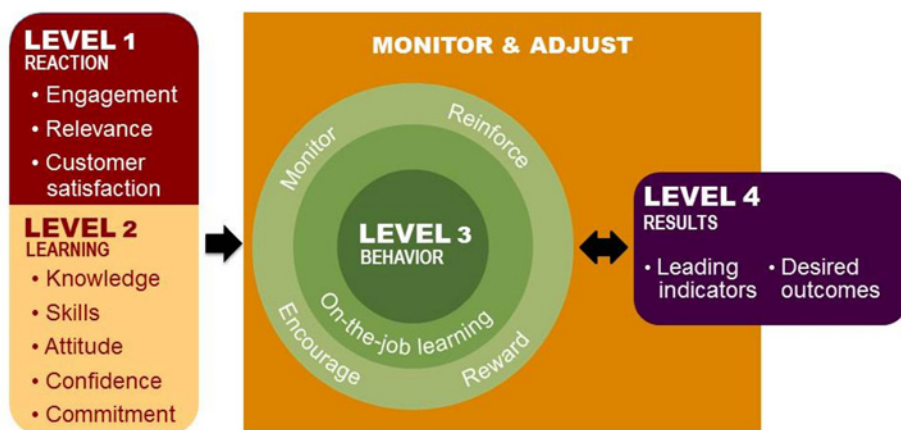### Agree with your stakeholders how you will measure the success of the training.

Globally, most effort and resource goes into evaluating how well learners

THE KIRKPATRICK MODEL

Level 4: Results	The degree to which targeted program outcomes occur and contribute to the organization's highest-level result
Level 3: Behavior	The degree to which participants apply what they learned during training when they are back on the job
Level 2: Learning	The degree to which participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills, attitude, confidence and commitment based on their participation in the training
Level 1: Reaction	The degree to which participants find the training favorable, engaging and relevant to their jobs

THE NEW WORLD KIRKPATRICK MODEL

LEVEL 1 REACTION
• Engagement
• Relevance
• Customer satisfaction

LEVEL 2 LEARNING
• Knowledge
• Skills
• Attitude
• Confidence
• Commitment

MONITOR & ADJUST

Monitor · Reinforce
LEVEL 3 BEHAVIOR
Encourage · On-the-job learning · Reward

LEVEL 4 RESULTS
• Leading indicators • Desired outcomes

reacted to the training, according to the Association of Talent Development 2016 *State of the Industry* report. This is typically through a 'smile' sheet or brief online survey. Far less resource is put into whether learners learned what was intended and even less to evaluating whether the training has transferred to on-the-job behaviour and to whether the training is having an impact on the desired organisational results.

If the problem we mentioned at the beginning of this article is mission critical or of strategic importance, we would expect stakeholders to want to see data collected and reported on at Kirkpatrick Level 3—*Behaviour* (on the job performance)—and Kirkpatrick Level 4—*Results* (organisational impact).

Stakeholders generally are not interested in the results at Kirkpatrick Level 1 & 2, they are interested in whether people are doing what needs to be done and that this is achieving better results.

Deliver the training.
Research into how people learn best and the development of technologies has led to a large broadening of training options available. We would encourage you to work with your stakeholders to develop a mindset of 'effective training' as opposed to 'cost efficient' training.

The New World Kirkpatrick Model can provide you with good guidance here on identifying appropriate training:

· At Kirkpatrick Level 1, test likely *reaction* and ask: To what degree will participants react favourably to the learning event—how engaged will they be? How relevant will it be to their jobs? How satisfied will they be?

· At Kirkpatrick Level 2, test likely *learning* and ask: To what degree will participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills and attitudes based on their participation in the learning event? How confident and committed will they be to perform new skills on the job after training?

Evaluate the training.
Go back to the plan you put in place to measure the success of the training and evaluate how well participants reacted to the training and what they learned as a result of attending the training . Evaluate on-the-job performance and organisational impact if the training is important to stakeholders.

Work with stakeholders at a tactical level to drive on-the-job performance.
In Paula's story, her manager and colleagues had a key role to play in role-modelling coaching and supporting Paula to use her coaching skills on the job. We cannot emphasise enough the importance of gaining the active buy-in and commitment of managers or other close colleagues to the training package.

Bear in mind too, that keeping clear sight of how the training has transferred to on-the-job performance is going to be difficult. Managers of learners have this knowledge and insight so keeping close to them is going to help you gather credible evidence of how the training has affected on-the-job performance and also gives you the data to modify (if need be) the training for future groups.

Overcoming the challenges is, of course, easier said than done. Working closely with stakeholders from the outset, building relationships at a strategic and tactical level, is a good place to focus. **ET**

Leadership and organisational improvement facilitators and coaches **DAVID DEWHURST** and **MARK HARRIS** help organisations achieve their desired results through the increased performance of their people.
www.gmdpartnerships.co.nz