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Training Evaluation – an Overview

***How successful is your training? What impact has it made?
How do you measure your training results? Are you achieving 'best value'?***

Most traditional approaches to training and evaluation have advocated a series of levels through which an assessment is made of the effects of individual and learning activities that include:

- A learner's reaction to the 'learning experience' - commonly Feedback Forms
- The learning achievements of the participants – pre and post tests to measure achievements
- Changes in job behaviour – following up, 3 or 6 months later, with questionnaires to bosses and colleagues to find out if there has really been a change in behaviour and performance and identifying exactly what this is
- The organisational effect of specific learning interventions – for evidence that the training has had a positive effect on organisational results (though this can be difficult to prove)

However, the real success of training is difficult to measure if support for the application of the learning in the work place is not backed up by Line Management and if learning is not committed to, and accepted as a business driver.

Furthermore, with everyday that passes after a training event, it becomes more and more difficult to prove that it was the training that caused the people to change. This is because individuals are constantly being bombarded with new ideas and learning, from the media, from work, from cultural influences to the internet. The organisation itself is also constantly shifting, reacting and changing.

Keys to delivering training interventions of value:

The first key step in ensuring value and effectiveness of training to the organisation involves assessing the current alignment of learning and training processes against the organisation's strategic priorities. This involves:

- Assessing strategic learning priorities
- Aligning learning investments and processes with these priorities

The starting point for determining the value of learning interventions is to understand the organisation's strategic priorities. Aligning training and learning objectives with strategic objectives delivers the greatest value-add to the organisation. This alignment and measurement can be achieved using scorecard based measurement techniques, for example.

In addition other metrics can be employed to focus on organisational priorities rather than purely the individual learning intervention and the learner. These can include the following measures:-

- Learning function
- Return on expectation
- Benchmark and capacity
- Return on investment

In order to effectively evaluate training events, there is an option to measure nine possible outcomes:-

1. reaction to training
2. satisfaction with the way training was organised
3. knowledge acquisition
4. skills improvement
5. attitude shift
6. behavioural change
7. organisational results
8. return on investment
9. psychological capital

How the evaluation is implemented will depend upon which measures are chosen and the training objectives of the organisation.

A Training Needs Analysis would clarify and identify specific requirements, deliverables, objectives and expectations. Depending upon the needs of the organisation, a full training programme, coupled with coaching may best suit requirements and achieve results. Coaching is particularly helpful where behavioural change is required, for instance, for Leadership training or Line Management training.

Again, this would involve aligning the programme to the strategic outcomes of the organisation, assessing the individual requirements of each employee and working to achieve the skill and behavioural changes that are going to produce the results. This would take place over a period of time with milestones and training objectives being set, as well as quality management measures being in place.

In Summary:

To get *best value* from training and development interventions, it is recommended that this is developed in line with the strategic objectives of the organisation in order that individuals are given learning skills and competencies that add value and effectiveness to their role in meeting those strategic company objectives.

If this is an area you wish to take further, an outline programme can be provided covering the above elements.

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