



Management and Performance Associates – June 2008

The question that always remains in the air: How effective was the training session?

Getting a call from a new or existing client to discuss some of our training services always makes us very happy. Not only have we the possibility to help a group of people to change their workplace behaviors but we also have the chance to help them to become agents of change.

In our first discussion with a client we explore the specific needs behind the request. Questions like: Which are the competencies that impact the staff member's performance? Which specific behaviors need to be present so that tasks can be successfully performed on a daily basis? Our clients have no problems answering these two questions. Organizations are very clear about their needs, regardless of them being related to current performance gaps or to new behaviors that need to be incorporated due to a change in the business or organizational context.

A very different reaction is obtained when we explore the actions that the organization has implemented (or is planning to implement) in order to ensure that the competencies which will be acquired in the training session will actually be applied and reinforced. Most companies have no answer to this question. The maximum we get is something like "it is very hard to implement something like that."

Surprisingly, most organizations allocate a percentage of their budgets to training activities without a mechanism to ensure that the investment will provide a return in the form of new skills to support their strategies. By treating their training dollars as an expense, Managers quickly get rid of their development responsibility to their

staff members, by simply sending them to train. Done! "Now, get back to your real job and achieve your goals!"

This mechanism to ensure the return on the investment (newly developed competencies), includes five simple but powerful actions that effective managers should put in place: two as a preparation for the training session, one during its execution, and two as a follow-up. They are:

Preparing for the training session:

1. Clearly establish the criteria to select the most appropriate training program.

Define the competencies which need to be developed and the behaviors which will allow you to assess them. Remember: competencies are invisible. What allows us to understand if the competency is present or not are the observable behaviors.

2. Have a conversation with the employee to align expectations about their training starting in the next few days.

In order to do this, the manager needs to understand the program objectives, its content, the dynamics which will be developed and the Individual Development Plan the employee will prepare during the session.

During the training session

3. Do not interrupt your staff member with calls, emails or urgent messages.

Plan the temporary absence of the employee in advance. If you cannot avoid interrupting him/her, remember: the return on the training investment is



not a miracle but a consequence of responsible managerial actions.

Afterwards:

4. Meet with your employee during the week, immediately after the training session. Get his/her reactions to the session and understand his/her Individual Development Plan.

These simple four questions will do it:

- How was it?
- Which strengths have you identified?
- Which development areas have you identified?
- What will you do to transform these development opportunities into strengths?

5. Incorporate the Individual Development Plan into regular coaching conversations with this person.

Use this conversation to accelerate your staff development, to improve the relationship with this person and to support the company's strategy.

Do not miss this unique opportunity to make a training program into a powerful tool to support and develop your strategy.

When you are done with the fifth step you will understand why we are so happy when we can contribute to a group's development.

We want to know the good practices you use to guarantee training effectiveness in your organization. Soon you will be receiving a brief survey about this topic. Of course, results will be shared with our readers. We thank you in advance for your support on this topic.

See you next time. We welcome your feedback.

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