

Making Training Stick

Training Variables

There are 7 major variables that affect the degree to which learning is transferred to workplace practice.

- Trainer
- Participant
- Manager
- What is done during training
- What is done after training
- What is done before training
- And the design of the training or intervention

The first 6 can be categorised into two: Role - Players and Time Periods.

A grid of the first 6 variables forms a useful process for analysing which combination of variable leads to the greatest payoff for learning transfer.

Learning Transfer Matrix

Role Players	Time Period			
		Before	During	After
	Manager			
	Trainer			
Participant				

What combination delivers the greatest transfer of learning?

e.g. Is it what the trainer does during the program?

Or what the participant does after the program?

Please take a moment to consider this and rank your perception from 1 to 9, with 1 giving the greatest payoff and 9 the least.

According to Broad and Newstom, "Transfer of Learning" the effectiveness ranking is as follows:

See the next page after you have filled out your matrix above.

Learning Transfer Matrix

Role Players	Time Period			
		Before	During	After
	Manager	1	8	3
	Trainer	2	4	9
Participant	7	5	6	

Some Conclusions

Most trainers believe that what they do during the workshop has the greatest impact on how much learning is transferred. With the possible exception of Colin James, they are wrong. It is what the manager of the participant does before the workshop that has the greatest impact on how much learning is applied.

Why is this So?

Most individuals know at some level that the best way to get job satisfaction, reward and get ahead is to please your boss. The trouble is that most managers think they are very clear on communicating what is important, but most are weak at this. In times of rapid change the problem is magnified because the manager may not be sure what is required and in crises, so believes they do not have the time to tell the people supporting them what they want. "No time to sharpen the axe."

Managers who tell participants clearly before training what they expect them to learn, and more importantly, what they expect them to do after the workshop (start, stop, maintain) have the greatest impact on the extent to which the person is primed for learning and seeks ways in which to apply this after the workshop.

Trainers who follow good instructional design (the seventh factor) introduce structures that ensure that participants know what their managers want even before the workshop takes place. They also devise mechanisms to ensure the manager and participant have a planning discussion after the workshop to plan the implementation of the learning.

By getting the manager's input into what is required, and knowing that they are going to have to tell their manager after the workshop how this is going to be done, the participant learns better and is focused on application – even if the training is mediocre. (Most of us got degrees despite mediocre lecturers. Of course the process is enhanced by good facilitation – that is why what happens during the program is #4. The learning is further enhanced by good instructional design that uses diagnostics, application exercises, critical information etc.

And guess what? Which manager is more interested in following up on the application of the learning? The one whose subordinate disappeared for 2 days, or the manager who put in some work before the program? Of course the latter are more interested in the outcome and more likely to coach in application.

The Point

Getting managers involved in the learning process before and after the workshop is the best way to get payoff from the training investment. It is what good managers do anyway. Good learning design encourages average managers to do this as well.