



Six Ways To Make Training Stick

How about a new twist on some old ideas?

Recently, I had an opportunity to participate in training that received wonderful evaluations from the learners. We had fun in the classroom while some industry best practices were shared by the trainer and the participants. Everyone felt that time was well spent. A few people even took notes.

After the class, 12 participants went back to their desks and kept on working the way they had been working all along. One week later, only 2 participants could repeat back any of the key learning points. Not one was using the information from the training class to improve his/her on-the-job performance.

If this sounds like the training being offered in your environment, you are probably experiencing the same outcome as this firm did. No outcome at all.

In the spirit of sharing, I thought it was time to refresh the tried and true foundations of effective skill development. Here are 6 tips that will help your training programs translate into behavioral changes:

Forget about offering a “popular” program.

Popular programs are usually those where no one gets pushed outside his/her comfort zone. That means no one is asked to apply a new technique or demonstrate how the key learning points will get used on-the-job. This explains the popularity of gathering a group of people around a PC for web-based training. No one really needs to do anything. Or, the types of instructor-led classes where volunteers are the only ones who speak aloud (and then often only to tell what they already know). High score for the Trainer. Low score for ROI.

Successful training demands that learners demonstrate new skills before the end of each session. This does not lead to immediate popularity. Only a small % of learners actually like to stretch themselves. Keep in mind that training is not a popularity contest. Instead, it is a tool for developing talent to better serve your company and its customers.

For self-paced or classroom learning, be sure to include testing for understanding of the content. Then, follow each module with an interactive group activity that requires learners to prove their ability to incorporate the new information into their work. For very introverted learners, plan a one-on-one session with their trusted coach or mentor to be held immediately upon finishing the test.

Make peace with role-play and simulations.

It seems so much easier to skip these practice activities that take up a lot of time and make so many people unhappy. Trainers might prefer to avoid having to correct learners



in front of their peers. Learners might feel uncomfortable having to try something out for the first time with others listening. The training ends sooner and people get back to work. The problem is, without genuine skill practice, most people get back to work without taking any new skills along.

Nothing is more conducive to applying learning than simulation of the way in which it actually gets used on the job. The most effective practice activities include all of the steps and all of the skills that go with the job in the real world.

So, where someone's job includes any of the following 7 things, the role-play or simulation must do so as well:

- listening to a request
- responding appropriately
- asking the right questions in order to understand
- using systems tools
- making correct decisions based on company policy or standards
- completing an action
- wrapping up the situation or project

Create a standard opening so everyone gets used to focusing on outcome.

Whether your training is largely self-paced or instructor led, it will be most effective when learners feel there are consistent expectations every time. Examples for powerful standard openings you can re-use include:

- How this learning will help make their jobs easier
- The length of the training (time on-line, or in class, or with coach, or on independent study or in combination)
- What learners are expected to be able to demonstrate within 1 week of training, within 30 days of training, 60 days, etc.
- How success will be evaluated or assessed
- Tools and people that are available to help facilitate learning

Train Coaches 2-3 times.

Coaches must be able to demonstrate and teach “model behavior” in order to help learners with the substantial on-the-job portion of their learning. This may pose a challenge for those who do not have a lot of experience or mastery of the skills or tools. Help them by training them first with others who are in such leadership roles. If there are many examples of “model behavior” then Coaches must make a few of them their own. Allow extra time for skills practice. Their second training should be alongside their teams. In these programs, they can be the first to take the risk in role-playing proving their competence and enhancing their credibility. A third training can be provided as part of developing their coaching skills to observe and give feedback for the specific key



learning points of the specific training program.

Make a Coaching Program part of every Training Program.

Conventional wisdom states that 70% of learning happens on-the-job. Prepare your Managers, Mentors and Coaches to help learners move from the advanced beginners they will be at the end of the training to the competent, confident professionals they are expected to be within a reasonable learning period.

The key here is to make sure everyone commits time and energy to making the new information a useful part of their daily lives. Coaches must commit to conducting one-on-one and group coaching sessions specifically focused on bringing the new skills to life.

In addition, every training program should provide tools for coaching the specific key learning points. Examples include a checklist or process document for the new behaviors or skills, 20-minute team meeting activities for refresher training, and laminated cards or posters to be handed out as reminders. You can also take advantage of your eLearning capabilities by offering 10-minute reinforcement modules available based on the learners skill level or challenges.

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Celebrate success at 80%+.

Perfection is not necessary in order to succeed. When 80% of the people on a team can successfully demonstrate 80% or more of the new skills, your training has hit its mark. Plan rewards for these milestones so that each learner knows what to aim at and each Team Leader or Coach knows when his/her job supporting this specific training has been completed.



Whether your training is delivered on-line, in books, in classroom settings or one-to-one, these basic principles remind us that the ultimate goal of training is to develop individuals so they perform better at work. Your investment in time and budget will be rewarded when you take care to go back to these fundamentals.

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