



## Course Learning Outcomes for Unit IV

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

5. Assess the organizational structure/environment to determine which external participants use to obtain transfer of learning.
  - 5.1 Define effective transfer of training and the obstacles that can inhibit the transfer of learning.
  - 5.2 Explain why companies want to become learning organizations.
  - 5.3 Explain why collaboration is important to knowledge management.
  
8. Assess a training scenario to determine what type of evidence is needed to demonstrate training program success.
  - 8.1 Discuss reasons for evaluating training.
  - 8.2 Demonstrate the process to plan and execute a good training evaluation.
  - 8.3 Define formative and summative evaluation.

## Reading Assignment

### Chapter 5:

Program Design

### Chapter 6:

Training Evaluation

## Unit Lesson

### Company A

When Company A offers training programs, it is typically offered because a friend of a manager has said it worked well in their company, or the president of the company saw an article on the latest and greatest training and did not want Company A to fall behind in the newest training fad. After the training is conducted, there is rarely any follow up with the employees at Company A to see if they liked the training, if they learned anything from the training, or if the training helped the employees with their work processes. Most employees grumbled about going to a training session because they did not think it was relevant to their job and it just caused them to get further behind. When a training course was useful, the employees rarely had any backup materials after completing the course to refer back to if they had questions after the training session was completed.

### Company B

When Company B offers a training program, it either aligns with the company's overall strategy, or a department manager has requested a specific type of training due to requests from the employees in the department. Even when it is determined the training is needed, feedback is asked of the employees upon completion of the training. A questionnaire is given to each employee who completes a training course to gauge that employee's reaction to the training. In most cases, an assessment is given upon completing the training (or a few days later) to determine if learning occurred due to the training. After a month or two, the Training Manager follows up with the employees, and separately with their manager, to determine if the training has improved the departmental processes. Depending on the training and the time frame, this follow up is conducted in person or through an online questionnaire. Company B submits quarterly and yearly reports to their executive management team to update the team on how training has benefitted the company and to report the return on investment of individual training components and the overall training program.

In the scenarios above, Company B wants to ensure that transfer of training is occurring. According to Noe (2010), transfer of training refers to employees being able to effectively apply training (knowledge, skills, and behaviors) to their jobs. In previous units, you learned that effective training is a result of careful analysis, planning, and design. Transfer of training should be planned ahead of time. As a result of the careful analysis, solid objectives, and deliberate design (either by creating the training or choosing the training based on the objectives and strategies determined in previous stages), training professionals should not have to guess as to whether learning has occurred.

Designing training so that the training environment matches the work environment in as close a manner as possible can increase transfer of learning. Of course, it can be difficult to create an exact match (do you want a completely new pilot flying an airplane?) Simulations can be a viable solution. There are some training issues that the specific environment does not have to replicate, but general principles should be taught so that these principles can be used across a variety of situations. Customer service training is a good example of training that teaches key behaviors that may need to be used in a variety of customer situations.

The culture of the work environment itself can determine whether transfer of learning occurs. When training is not supported by departmental managers, employees can feel pressured to skip training sessions or not use the new skills provided by the training. Peer pressure in the form of “we have never done it that way in the past, why should we start now?” can also prevent training from being its most effective.

Over the past 10 years, a new paradigm shift has emerged that pushes for companies and employees to become learning organizations. Learning organizations encourage a flat management structure, creative thinking, team environments, and quick modifications to stay ahead of changes and competition. Knowledge management can be a key issue, not just in a learning organization, but in any organization that is trying to stay on the cutting edge. Providing a quick and easy way for employees to access the information they need to stay on top of their work allows all employees to be more productive. In a department that requires specific processes, use of specific documents, and specific communication techniques that should be used for customers, a department website or a company network with all documentation creates a self-sufficient department that allows workers and managers to accomplish more during their day.

## **Evaluation and Return on Investment**

Evaluation is a key step in the ADDIE (analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation) phases that have been discussed in these first four units. Evaluation is determining the worth, merit, and value of a program. It is the process of looking at the goals and objectives of a training program set ahead of time, and determining whether the training met the objectives.

During the design phase of training, formative evaluation is conducted. This evaluation process is used to ensure that the training is accurate, the methods of training chosen are suitable to the learners, and the changes that need to be made to the training are made before the training is implemented. Formative evaluation usually occurs in three stages. A one-to-one evaluation is conducted by a subject-matter expert who looks at the entire training program and makes any suggestions necessary. The next stage of formative evaluation is a small group evaluation—groups of two or three participate in the training, once again to evaluate the program and make suggestions for changes if needed. Before a training program is completely rolled out, the third stage of formative evaluation should occur. This is a field trial and is conducted with a group of learners (maybe one department of a company). This group of learners makes suggestions before the training program is implemented to the entire company.

Summative evaluation is conducted after the training has occurred. The most widely used and popular model for the evaluation of training programs is known as the four levels of learning evaluation. The model was first defined by Donald L. Kirkpatrick in a series of articles that appeared in the *U.S. Training and Development Journal* in 1959 (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). The idea behind the model is for an organization to have meaningful evaluation of learning in the organization. The degree of difficulty increases as you move through the levels. However, the knowledge learned regarding the effectiveness of the training program more than compensates for this.

The four levels of the model are:

- Level 1: Reaction
- Level 2: Learning
- Level 3: Behavior
- Level 4: Results

**Level 1: Reaction:** Kirkpatrick refers to Level 1 as a measure of customer satisfaction. Reaction evaluation is conducted immediately after a training course. Most of the forms that people fill out at the end of a class or workshop are instruments for measuring Level 1. Think about the training courses you have participated in. Most courses take care of reaction evaluation fairly well. These end of course questionnaires typically ask questions regarding the classroom environment, the facilitator, the subject of the training, the effectiveness of the facilitator, and the effectiveness of the training, to name a few of the issues covered. Unfortunately, many training courses stop at the reaction level and do not employ the other three levels.

**Level 2: Learning:** Kirkpatrick defines learning as the extent to which participants change attitudes, increase knowledge, and/or increase skill as a result of attending a program. To measure learning, you need to determine what skills were learned during the training, what skills were developed or improved, and/or what attitudes were changed. This evaluation level typically requires an assessment tool—a test of some sort to determine if skills and attitudes changed. Although a traditional pen and paper test can be given, assessments do not have to include this type of test, instead training participants can be asked to produce a product, create a portfolio, or perform a series of tasks to assess that learning occurs. Thinking “out of the box” in terms of assessments can make adult learners feel more comfortable instead of taking a traditional pen and paper test. Learning evaluation occurs immediately after training or within a day or two after training.

**Level 3: Behavior:** Level three can be defined as the extent to which a change in behavior has occurred because someone attended a training program. In order for change in behavior to occur, four conditions are necessary. These conditions include a learner desiring to change, knowing what to do and how to do it, working in the right climate, and receiving rewards for change. Typically, behavior evaluation requires input from the learner, their peers, their managers, and others who interact with the learner on a regular basis. As you read the conditions required for behavior change, you might realize that this change is not just brought on by the learner, and that the organization may need to change its structure in order to provide the necessary rewards to help encourage behavior changes. This step in the evaluation process is conducted through questionnaires and interviews. For many organizations, evaluation ends at Level 3.

**Level 4: Results:** This involves measuring the final results that occurred because a person attended a training session. This can include, but is not limited to, measuring increased production, improved work quality, or reduced turnover. Results evaluation can measure not just a specific training course, but an entire training program. Level 4 evaluations can be difficult because you must determine what final results occurred because of attendance and participation in a training program. You must also evaluate the conditions that the trainee is operating in. It is important to determine whether the conditions set forth above in Level 3 have been met. If there are conditions in the office that prevent the trainee from using the knowledge that they have learned, then the training cannot be faulted for not “doing the job.” The problem lies in the conditions that the employee is working in.

### Evaluation Criteria

There are three types of criteria for evaluating training: internal, external, and participants’ reactions. Internal criteria are directly associated with the content of the program. For example, whether the employee learned the facts or guidelines covered in the program. External criteria are related more to the ultimate purpose of the program. For example, improving the effectiveness of the employees. Possible external criteria include job performance rating, the degree of learning transfers from training and development sessions to on-the-job situations, increases in sales volume, and decreases in turnover. Participants’ reactions, or how the subjects feel about the benefits of a specific training experience, is a commonly used internal criterion.

Most experts argue that it is more effective to use multiple criteria to evaluate training. Others contend that a single criterion such as the extent of transfer of training to on-the-job performance and other aspects of performance is a satisfactory approach to evaluation.

The best research test to use for effective evaluation is a pre-test/post-test control group scenario. This method creates two separate groups in which one group is given the criteria and the other group is used as a control group. Both groups are given a pre-test, the criteria (or training in this case) is given to one group, and then both groups are given a post-test. This method allows the training to be isolated to see if it effectively created a change. In a research environment, this test works well. In a business environment, few companies want to take the time to create control groups, and unequal opportunities can present a problem in some work environments.

### **Return on Investment**

It can be very important to the life of a training department to measure the return on investment (ROI) in regards to its training programs. Return on investment measures the cost of not conducting the training with the cost of conducting the training. In some cases, it has been compared as a Level 5 evaluation in Kirkpatrick's evaluation model.

ROI looks at costs of training: costs of the training instructors, classrooms, equipment, materials, indirect costs such as salaries and benefits, development costs, and overhead costs. ROI looks at benefits to training—money made due to an increase in production, a reduction in cost due to fewer errors in production, and a reduction in hiring expenses due to employee retention. The costs are compared to the benefits to determine the value of the training.

In conclusion, transfer of learning, evaluation and return on investment must be measured. The effective measurements of these areas can go a long way in proving the need for training within an organization.

### Reference

Kirkpatrick, D., & Kirkpatrick, J. (2006). *Evaluating training programs: The four levels* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Berrett Koehler.

Noe, R. A. (2010). *Employee training and development*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.