



BARRIERS AND MYTHS TO EVALUATION OF TRAINING

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ABSTRACT

The challenge for all HRD Managers today is to justify the investment done for training of employees. To measure the effectiveness of training conducted and to check the transfer of learning to the job is becoming more and more pertinent to all HRD managers. Globalisation and stiff competition has laid more stress on performance, and therefore continuous training for better productivity. But whether this training is ensuring better performance or not needs to be checked and measured. There are many models and theories prevalent to evaluate training, but there are very few organisations measuring the effectiveness of training.

The objective of this paper is to address to all the myths and barriers to evaluation of training. This paper seeks to attempt to increase the understanding of what challenges come in the way of conducting an evaluation of training.

Keywords: Evaluation of training, Measuring training effectiveness, Performance gap

Abbreviation: Return on Investment (ROI)

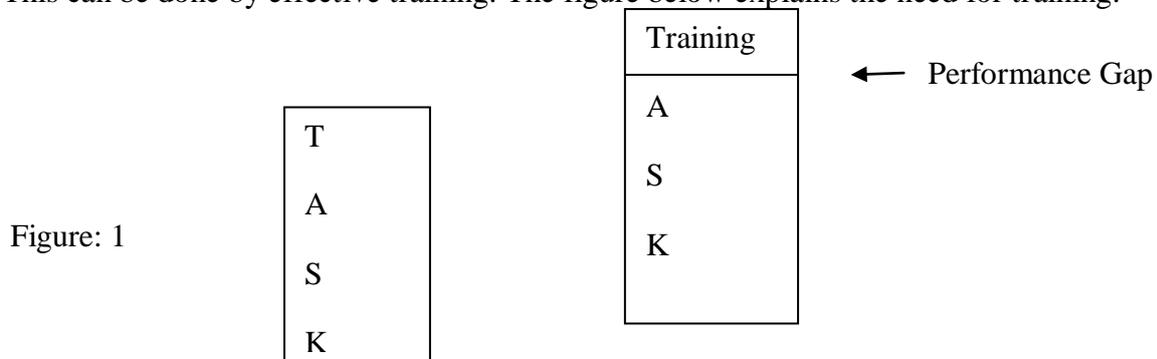
Introduction:

More and more focus and pressure is being put on the HRD department to justify its existence as a department, especially the training and development vertical under HRD. Therefore it is important for HRD to evaluate employee training and justify that it is an investment for better performance and not a cost (Strategic Human Resource Management, 2001). Training evaluation is a critical tool that proves the need to invest in human capital (Enkuzena S.2011).

As per Pilar Pineda, "Evaluation of training in organisations is the analysis of the total value of a training system or action in both social and financial terms, in order to obtain

information on the achievement of its objectives and the overall cost- benefit ratio of training, which in turn guides decision- making.” (Pineda, 2010)

Training is conducted to ensure increased performance. An employee has a level of knowledge, skill and attitude. But there is a performance gap which needs to be filled up. This can be done by effective training. The figure below explains the need for training:



So measuring of effectiveness of training has become pertinent.

Evaluation of training has made good progress in the last 50 years. There are many models being followed and the most often used is the Kirkpatrick’s four levels model (ASTD and i4cp, 2009). The model suggested by Kirkpatrick (1959) has four levels. Level one is the reaction. In this level the instant reactions of the trainees is taken. This is often referred to as smile sheets or immediate reaction questionnaire. Level 2 is the learning. In this level the extent of learning is checked. Since all the employees undergoing are adults and adults do not appreciate being evaluated, this stage needs to be dealt more subtly. Learning is checked in the form of quizzes, reinstating of learning, recapitulation and reinforcement of learning. Level 3 is to measure the change in behaviour of the employee, as this is important, since the whole endeavour of training is to ensure there is a change in the behaviour of the employee. This is done by supervision & observation, mostly done by immediate supervisor or manager. The 4th and the last level is results. It is measuring of the change in the organisation. This is done by the senior management and during HR audits.

Initially evaluation of training was seen as just a practise of gathering the feedback form or the smile sheets. Feedback regarding the training conducted with parameters like content, ambience, training facilities, aids, trainer’s skills and relevancy of training in regards to jobs being performed was taken.

Barriers to Evaluation

According to Sunita D et al. (2011), the failure to evaluation of training programmes can be because of:

- Inadequate planning or design
- Lack of objectivity
- Evaluation errors of one sort or the other
- Improper interpretation of results
- Improper use of results

Lack of sponsorships or budget (Abernathy, 1999; Goldstein 1993; and Sims, 1993)

According to Sims (1993) companies fail to do the training evaluation correctly and thus do not valid business or performance results.

According to Phillips J J et al; 2004

- There are too many models. After the first model by Kirkpatrick (1959), there have been hundreds of models suggested and thus it is being difficult to understand which one to choose. Even today the most widely used and accepted model is Kirkpatrick's.
- Some of the models suggested are very complex.
- Lack of understanding the importance of evaluation of training
- Most often evaluation is considered as a post training activity, whereas it is an integrated activity to be considered at the design stage.

Sometimes evaluators are not trained in the principles of techniques of evaluation, which include the use of data gathering instruments (Goldstein, 1993; Sims, 1993).

There is a lack of objectivity in training programmes, evaluations that is not focusing on the components of training situation as an integrated system (Bernthal, 1995; Sims, 1993). Since evaluation is not being thought about in the design stage, the effective measure is not being done systematically.

According to Enkuzena S, 2011 the main barriers of evaluating training programmes are insufficient knowledge of T& D specialists, lack of time and money resources, not separating the training process and training results in the training evaluation, large number of training participants, not precisely defined training goals, information produced by third parties, a wide range of training themes and planned outcomes and “learning bleed”.

According to Eseryl D 2002 the barriers for evaluation of training are insufficient budget allocated, insufficient time allocated, lack of expertise, blind trust in training solutions and lack of methods and tools.(McEvoy & Buller,1990).

As per Farjad S,2012 that the effectiveness of evaluation can be improved through optimizing training design, redefining training roles, providing enough budget, management commitment, attention to individual, job and organisational needs, motivation mechanism, use of ongoing and summative evaluation.

According to Patel L, 2001, the barrier that comes largest is the difficulty in isolating learning as a factor that has an impact on the results. The next common factor is the lack of useful evaluation system with the learning management system, and the third factor is that evaluation data are not standardised enough to compare well across functions.

According to brews T,2001, evaluation of training is seen as not required by the management, lack of training or experienced, little perceived value to the organisation, a policy prohibited by the training and union opposition, training is done as to meet legal requirements, and unavailability of data for this form of evaluation.

Myths

Measurement and evaluation is too expensive. Many organisations spend 3 to 5 % of the total training budget on evaluation of training. Infact sometimes it is even less. (Burkett, 2001). Even then this is a common myth that evaluation is very expensive.

Ten myths presented by Jack J Phillips: (Handbook of Training Evaluation: Measurement Methods, 1997)

Myth 1: I can't measure the results of my training effort.

One of the many myths about training evaluation is that the value of training cannot be measured. Many feel that the value of professional and management programmes cannot be identified and measured. But this is not true. With so many models and with the use of technology one can measure the impact of any training.

Myth 2: I don't know what information to collect.

While designing the training programme the objective or the outcomes is decided accurately, then data required to measure is easy to ascertain. The reason the programme is being

conducted is to fill in a performance gap. So the objectives of the programme can become the bench mark for evaluation.

Myth 3: I can't calculate the ROI then it is useless to evaluate the programme.

Determining the return on investment should be the priority for any HRD. Though this needs time and efforts, there are many models to help measure ROI.

Myth4: Measurement is only effective in production or financial arenas.

The need for evaluation of training has become two folds. Today it is very much pertinent in the service industry too.

Myth 5: My Chief Executive Officer (CEO) does not require evaluation.

For very HRD exist it is important for them to justify the investment on training and give substantial evidence to show the training is resulting in the improvement of performance. If this is not done the there can be danger for the department, especially during recession.

Myth 6: there are too many variables affecting the behaviour change for me to evaluate the impact of training.

There are many variables affecting the behaviour, but many researchers have shown that some remain constant. Jobs today are complex and it is important to analyse interrelated variables.

Myth 7: evaluation will lead to criticism.

Evaluating of training may lead to negative feed back. But this should not be the reason for not evaluating. If the evaluation is done, we shall at least find the stage at which it has failed.

Myth 8: I don't need to justify my existence; I have a proven track record.

Even though as an individual the HRD manager has established an excellent reputation, it is the existence of the department which needs to be justified.

Myth 9: measuring progress toward having objectives is an adequate evaluation strategy.

This is more focused on delivery, content, and action taken. But in today's competitive world simply measuring the progress towards the outcome is inadequate. Evaluation strategies must show the change in behaviour of the employees and bring in a change in the organisation.

Myth 10: Evaluation would probably cost too much.

Evaluation if done systematically, shall not cost much, it costs only 3-5% of the training budget or even less (Burkett, 2001).

Conclusion

The main barriers found in the review of literature, as to why organisations fail to do evaluation of training are:

In adequate planning or design during the design of training. Few organisations understand that evaluation is an integral part of the entire training cycle starting from training need analysis. They presume it be a separate effort to be done only at the end of training.

There is lack of objectivity in framing the outcomes or the objective of training. If the outcomes are scientifically framed for the perceived up gradation of performance and the content is relevant for the up gradation, then only the training given shall be effective.

There are too many proposed models, and some are very complex. There is a lack of useful evaluation system which can fit into various themes of training. There is also lack of knowledge and skill to use the varied evaluation models available. Evaluation data is not standardised enough to compare well across all functions. There are evaluation errors of one sort or the other and also wrong interpretation of results. Even when the results are there, there is improper use of results.

One of the major barriers found is the lack of budget and time. Many managers feel that it is not required. It has little perceived value to the organisation.

The other barriers mentioned are large number of participants and training programmes being conducted, so back to back evaluation for so many participants cannot be done. Sometimes there is also opposition from the union for the evaluation.

The main myths found in the review of literature are that evaluation of training is to process, results gathered cannot be measured accurately as there is lack of knowledge regarding required information to collect, evaluation of training is useless unless ROI is measured, and it is effective in case of production or financial arenas. Some myths are also that the organisational heads ask for evaluation, in case of evaluation if the results are negative it might lead to criticism, and some HRD also think that since they have a proven track record they need not justify their programmes.

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