



Management Learning & Coaching

7 Ways to Stop Wasting Your Training Budget...

...and ensure its working for you!

Presented by

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How much of your training budget are you currently wasting?

Frittering away with no real return on your investment? Let me ask you this in a different way: how do you measure the value of the training you're currently buying in or providing?

This is not supposed to be a trick question, yet for many HR or L&D professionals, it's a question that is almost impossible to answer. If you wish to invest the company's money in a capex (capital expenditure) or physical item, you will probably be asked by your colleagues in Finance to calculate the ROI (Return on Investment) over the lifetime of that item. They will want to see how much each £1 spent on the new machine will bring in to the organisation through increased sales, shorter work processes, more accurate measurement or less re-work, for example. By not measuring the ROI on training, here are seven ways in which organisations are wasting a significant proportion of their training spend:



1. Managers see training as a destination rather than a process

Training is seen as the solution, rather than the input or resource required in order to achieve the desired outcome. A project management course or certification in Microsoft applications, for example, is the means to an end, and not the end in itself. These are frequently seen on appraisal forms as objectives in themselves, or worse, a wish-list written by the appraisee, with little thought to the business need they are resolving.

For some managers, training for their team is seen as an inconvenience, something that prevents the day job being done, rather than as an enabler.

For this reason, they may consider it acceptable to cancel a team member's place on a training course at short notice because the day job is more important. More bizarrely, some will send a replacement in his/her place to avoid late cancellation penalties, even if the stand-in has no apparent connection with the topic to be learnt, or any real desire to learn it!

? *How do you ensure that the training you buy or deliver is purposeful and outcome-focused for every delegate?*



1. Delegates arrive without clear learning objectives or plans to implement the learning post-workshop

It is rare to meet delegates on training courses who have actually met with their manager before the workshop to discuss their *specific* learning objectives and how they expect to utilise the new skills and knowledge following the workshop. With no clear, specific learning outcomes, the relative 'success' of a training course in meeting its objectives becomes much harder as there are no pre-determined or *agreed* success criteria.

A post-workshop happy sheet often contains the question: 'How successful was the course in meeting your objectives?' What objectives? The question becomes impossible to answer, or the answer is based upon some hastily-crafted learning objectives jotted on a flipchart at the start of the day, (as well as the desire to leave promptly at the end of the training day). If delegates arrive without objectives, who is responsible for setting the objectives for the workshop? The trainer? The HR business partner? Other delegates? Who is at fault if the objectives, that were not present at the start of the day, are not achieved? (I know there are too many negatives in this question to afford it a proper answer - but you get the picture!)



? ***How (and when) will you measure whether the training you buy in or deliver is fit for purpose if there are no clear success criteria from the outset?***

2. Action plans that result from training workshops rarely see the light of day or re-appear post-workshop

The fanciest, most detailed and well-meaning action plans drawn up on training workshops are worth nothing if they sit in a workbook or equally fancy folder afterwards and never see the light of day. Without follow-up, without ongoing discussion, coaching and re-focussing with the manager or mentor, ***an entire training course*** is as good as forgotten 30 days after the course!



The human brain is a complex organ that is pre-programmed

to drop out information when it becomes overloaded; typically it is designed to hold around **seven** pieces of information at one time. Therefore as soon as new information is added (ie. from the emails and 'real work' that hits the delegate at the end of a training day) the learning from the workshop quickly becomes history.

? ***How can you ensure that training becomes more than 'a day out of the office' and delegates are helped to implement the learning?***

3. No-one 'owns' the follow-up with delegates after a month, three months, six months... to check progress and implementation of action plans

How do you measure and evaluate the effectiveness of a training course? More

importantly, *who* does this, and *when*? HR, with the happy sheet at the end of the course? What does the end of course



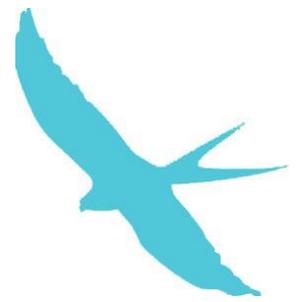
evaluation sheet tend to measure at this stage in the delegate's learning journey? Whether they enjoyed the knowledge transfer process? Whether they hit it off with the trainer? How they found the sandwiches at lunchtime?

Who checks what happens once the delegate returns to their workplace? For how long after a training course do you expect the new-found skills and information to 'stick'? How would you know if delegates returned to the workplace and applied nothing from the training; after all, the comfort zone can be an enticing (not to mention expensive) place after a training course if there is no incentive or support to stay in the 'stretch zone'.

? ***How can a 'happy sheet' possibly measure the effectiveness of learning when applied to the learner's workplace, when the learning is put to the test against the 'old-world' ways of working after a training course?***

4. Managers assume the job of developing or even managing their staff is done when they sign the training requisite!

Most of us have come across the delegate who has been *sent* by the manager for remedial training without understanding why they are there; the



training is intended to replace a difficult performance conversation that needs to take place. This is made harder where the delegate's needs are clearly greater than, or at least different from the other delegates in the room.



Employees in this category are set up to fail from the start, often the L&D business partner and the trainer too! The workshop can be negatively impacted for the rest of the delegates, particularly if the 'needy' employee requires proportionately more trainer attention throughout the day.

? How do we ensure that managers manage their staff, and do not use training as a crèche for under-performing team members?

5. Training providers are picked for the ratio cost to amount of 'stuff' they agree to cram into a training day rather than the 'stickiness' of that 'stuff' and of the methods used



How quickly do you suppose the typical delegate will forget new information if that information is copious, not well linked to things they

already know, and is not immediately used or repeated? Think of all the information **you** are bombarded with on a typical Monday at work – in emails, meetings, journals, news bulletins on the car radio on the way home... And that's without the added complication of a training course! What proportion of this do you retain by the end of a working day? What proportion of this do you retain by the end of Tuesday, after another set of information has been added to Monday's information, then Wednesday, Thursday and Friday? What if you attended a training course on one of those days, so the amount of new information was increased yet further?

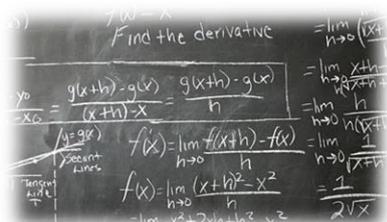
Research has shown that the speed with which we forget information that is not repeated, reviewed, refreshed or re-used may be reliably measured and plotted on a graph known as the 'Forgetting Curve'. If the new information was not presented in a '**sticky**' way in the first place, the forgetting happens even faster! By the end of 30 days, we will have forgotten 80% of everything we learnt on the course that has not been repeated, refreshed and reviewed since. So just how much refreshing and reviewing is necessary to ensure new skills and information remains useful?

? How do we ensure learning happens in a 'sticky' way and the repeating, refreshing and reviewing happens consistently in the workplace?



6. Training without the 'emotional quotient' is like watching paint dry!

What was your favourite subject at school, and why? Did it have something



to do with the teacher, how they got the learning across to

you, how they made it memorable? As you remember back to that time, what do you remember about the teacher, about how you felt when learning that subject?

In many organisations it is not culturally appropriate to talk about 'feelings' or 'emotions' when it comes to learning, and yet many of us will harbour feelings from our schooldays that will have a direct impact on our learning experience as an adult. If I had £1 for every employee I've worked with who had limiting beliefs about their ability to write good reports, spell, stand up in front of a group and present their work, understand finances... I could continue! If we do not understand and utilise the 'emotional quotient' of the learning journey, we risk making training feel like a trip to the dentist!

? *How can we better understand and capture the 'emotional quotient' in the learning experiences we provide for staff?*

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