



Learning Transfer Guide

AC3.1

Transfer of learning is utilizing the learned knowledge and skills in a particular situation, a classroom for example, to new situations, real life, and workplace instances (Sharma, 2023). Near transfer is when learning is transferred in similar situations while far transfer is in a completely different context (Ferlazzo, 2017). In the workplace, it is crucial for learning to be implemented in the real world and aligned with business needs; otherwise, learning is for the sake of learning, not for better performance

Benefits:

Learning per se is not a goal, transferring learning to workplace context for a better performance is the real goal. The individuals and the business can reap many benefits:

1. **Increased performance and productivity:** Learning programs aligned with the organizational needs, strategy, and objectives provide learners with knowledge and skills tailored to their needs and organization's objectives. Hence, it will boost performance, increase productivity, and efficiency.
2. **Boosted Motivation:** Ensuring learning transfer increases performance and capabilities of employees as they practice what they have learned. As practice makes perfect, their competence and mastery will increase, their ability to make decisions and solve problems grows, which boost their motivation. The more competent they are, the more motivated they will be to achieve better results (Pink, 2009).

3. **Adaptability and flexibility:** When learners transfer their learning to a new situation, they are more adaptable and flexible in using their knowledge and applying it in different situations. Employees' adaptability and flexibility are especially important in a constantly changing working environment.
4. **Cost and time efficiency:** Transferring the new acquired skills and knowledge to everyday work ensures applying the latest best practice which helps individual work more effectively and efficiently which would be translated to high quality product and top-notch services which will reduce work time and cost associated with it.
5. **Organizational Impact:** Having competent and motivated employees who are implementing their newly acquired skills and knowledge in their business-as-usual activities leads to higher performance and productivity. That will, indeed, boost overall organizational performance, innovation, competitiveness.

For example, transferring the learning acquired in a customer service program into daily work would result in motivated and satisfied employees, satisfied customers, and more business revenues.



Risks:

However, failing to transfer learning to work has several risks:

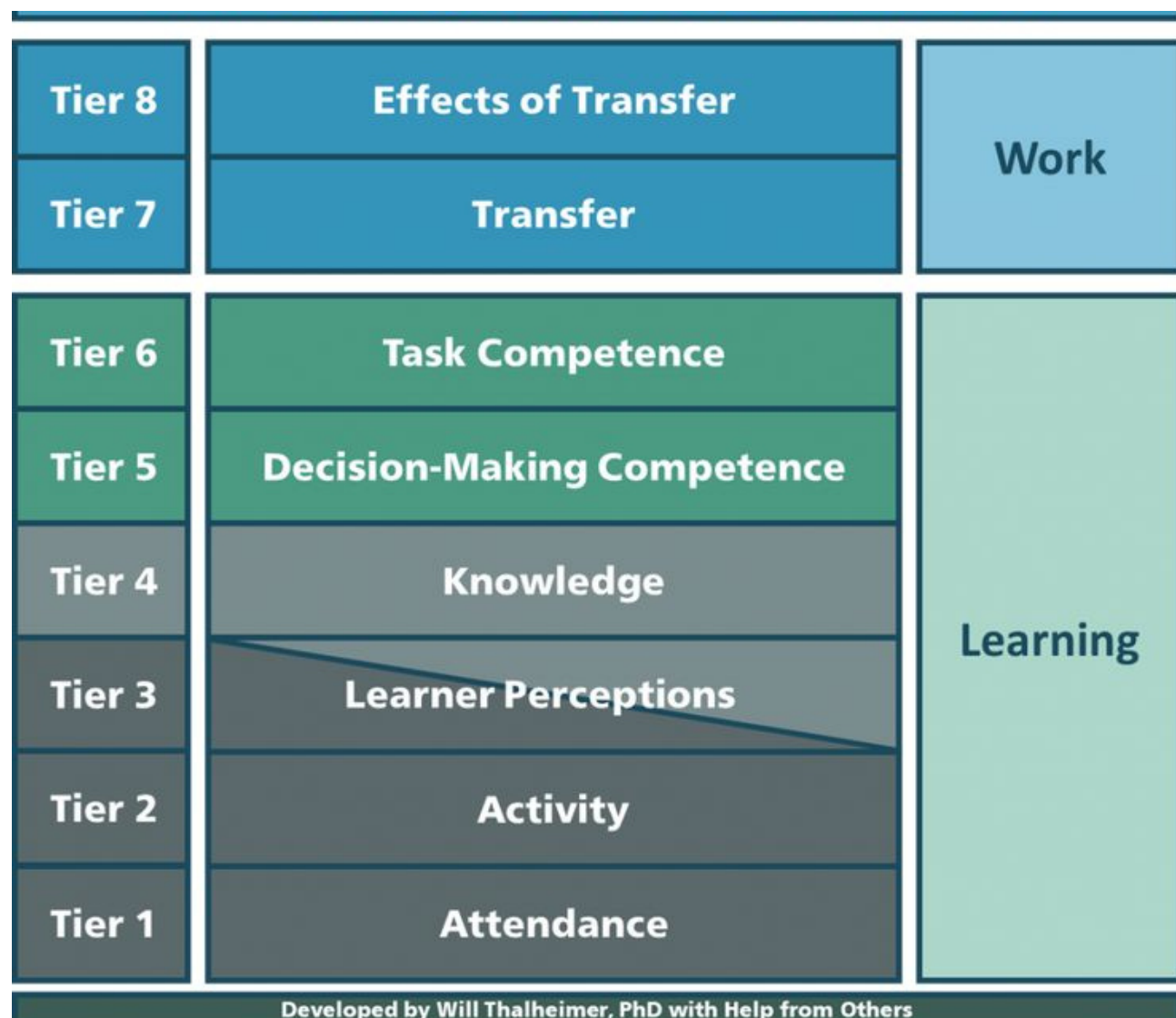
1. **Wasted resources:** Learners would forget what they have learned within a few days if not hours if they did not practice. Therefore, if learning did not transfer to the work context, resources spent on learning are wasted as no benefit gained out of learning in terms of performance.

2. **Reduced productivity:** Employees who are not able to apply what they have learnt are less productive. They are likely to delay work due to inefficiency or inability to perform their tasks all together. For example, an employee got training on a new machinery, but he could not apply near transfer and operate the machine effectively and needed assistance. That will, indeed, reduce productivity.
3. **Stagnation and obsolescence:** In a rapidly changing world, knowledge and skills are becoming outdated very fast. L&D helps organizations upskills and reskills its employees with the most recent advancements and technology. If the learning has not been transferred to the working practices, employees would not be able to cope with the recent business updates. For example, a marketing team is using the old marketing methodologies which are not relevant today with the rise of e-marketing, and after learning intervention with brand new e-marketing strategies, if the learning is not implemented, employees would be outdated, and the organization would lose a lot.
4. **Performance gaps:** Organizations set its goals based on the knowledge and skills its employees deemed to have. They provide employees with L&D to perform up to a certain standard based on which performance is evaluated. Therefore, if learning is not transferred, there would be a performance gap between actual performance and the expected one after learning and development intervention.
5. **Damaged employer branding:** If the organization is known for its useless L&D interventions, its employer brand will be damaged as candidates will not show interest in working for such organizations.



How to reap the benefits and avoid the risks of learning transfer? The LTEM (Learning-Transfer Evaluation Model) is a renowned model based on the Kirkpatrick model and adds to it to ensure that the learning is transferred.

LTEM: Learning-Transfer Evaluation Model



Thalheimer W., (n.d.)

LTEM evaluates the learning process in 8 hierarchical tiers: the first four tiers evaluate learning while the last 4 tiers evaluate learning transfer. The first four tiers look for learners' attendance, their participation in learning activities, their perceptions about the learning intervention: how effective it was, and knowledge of facts and terminology they gained because of learning. These tiers would not guarantee learning can result in better performance (Marijn, 2018); it just evaluates the learning process.

The last four tiers evaluate the decision-making competence of learners in relevant situations to the learning after few days of learning, completing a relevant task to the learning after few days of learning which ensures that learners have learnt something, actual transfer of learning in learner behavior intuitively. The last tier evaluates the effect of

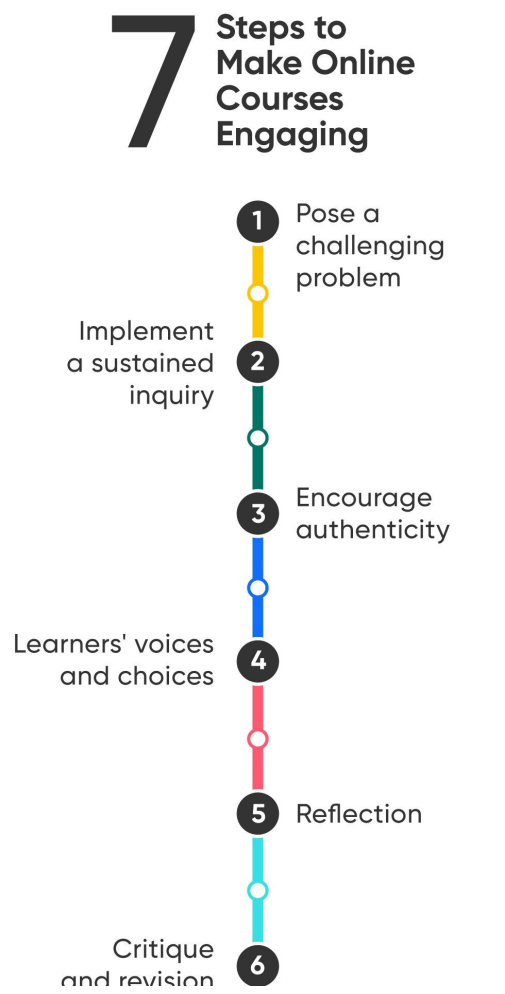
learning exceeding the task itself, the effect on the learner's colleagues, department, and the organization as a whole (Marijn, 2018).



AC3.2

Work-project projects:

Work-based learning is learning a set of skills and behaviors while working (Indeed, 2023). It is about immersing learners in real world projects from which they can practice the acquired skills planned in the learning objectives.





(Lawless, 2019)

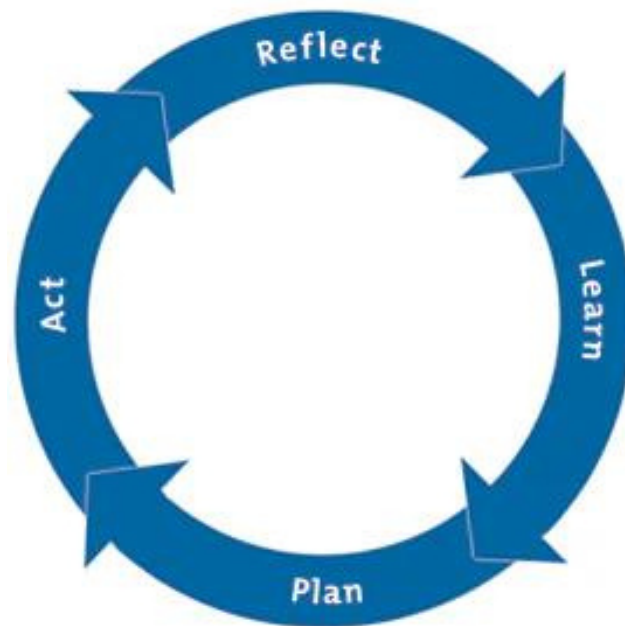
To implement work-based learning in a workplace, a facilitator should pose an authentic challenging problem (relevant to the workplace) to learners so that it stimulates a sustained inquiry. After learners have attempted to find a solution, they should be listened to before revision and evaluating and presenting the findings (Lawless, 2019).

Since work-based projects immerse learners in real world challenges, it enables them to relate their knowledge with actual workplace challenges and apply the knowledge they have for solving real problems (Woods, 2019). It also helps learners to form a sense of purpose of what they are learning. They acquire theoretical knowledge with the end in mind which motivates them to acquire the knowledge in more depth. For example, when a learner is acquiring knowledge about handling angry customers, studying the best practice on their desk is different from facing a customer face-to-face; it brings other challenges that need further knowledge and research.

However, work-based projects have its own drawbacks. Work-based projects may not fit all learning styles; it suits some personalities over the others (Lawless, 2019). Learners have their own style of learning: visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinesthetic (Broadbent, 2021). Work-based learning suits kinesthetic style of learning. Therefore, it should be blended with other learning strategies to make the maximum benefits for all learners. For example, a lecture in a traditional context of learning is used to provide learners with theoretical knowledge in addition to hands-on practice in a work-based project.

Action learning sets:

Action learning sets are about bringing together a small team of people at the same seniority rank to think about a common problem, work out solutions, and reflect on the results (Mind Tools, n.d.). The person who raises the issue in the group is called the issue holder or consultation seeker (de Haan, E. and de Ridder, I. 2005). The whole group tries to find a solution for the problem in a learning context.



(Mind Tools, n.d.)

In a workplace context, the group take to one another, reflect on issues raised by the issue holder so that they can learn from the discussion and plan for an action to implement the solution in the act stage (action learning cycle) (Mind Tools, n.d.).

The sets of action learning are gathered to discuss certain workplace issues between peers. It creates a safe environment in which the members do not fear criticism or blame (Connecting to Excellence, n.d.). That is because the goal of the gathering is to figure out the issue and learn how to figure out solutions. That safe environment of learning practice is rarely suffering from group thinking between members. When members freely expose their vulnerabilities and receive feedback from others, it creates an environment that ensures the learning transfer from one another.

Research by de Haan and de Ridder (2005) explains the limitations of action learning sets with regards to transfer of learning. The consultation seeker must have a problem or a need for learning to raise an issue within the group. In other words, it cannot be used for developmental purposes; it is based only on a need to solve a problem. In addition, the rest of the group are less likely to transfer learning to other contexts; the issue holder is more likely to learn on implementation and experimentation of what he/she has learned.

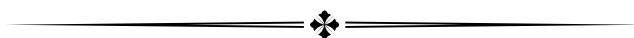
Coaching provision:

Whitmore (n.d.) defines coaching as “Coaching is unlocking a person's potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them”. It is based on the belief that learners have clues to their own problems; the coach is more a facilitator than a teacher. A coach asks learners questions that stimulate thinking and relating what they have learned to other contexts.

Workplace coaching is about on-the-job training that occurs through everyday interaction between employees and their managers or even between peers (Verlinden, n.d.).

Coaching helps learners to apply what they have learned in their workplace. The coach helps the learners to relate the knowledge that they acquired to the organization context. A coach does not have to be a subject matter expert; they only stimulate thinking of the learner.

However, a study on more than 200 organizations where managers used coaching techniques to transfer learning, they failed to improve employees' performance (Leimbach, n.d.). Poor coaching skills of the coach (managers and peers) leads to poor engagement of learners and soon they will lose motivation to transfer what they have learned.



AC3.3

Transfer of learning to be embedded in learner competency and behavior is believed to be more important than the learning process itself. Without an impact on employees' behavior and performance, learning is a waste of resources. The link between L&D and employees to ensure learning transfer is line managers; therefore, they have a vital role in transferring learning. There are five potential approaches to engage line managers in learning transfer (Cegos, 2015):

- **Explaining the benefits of training**

Managers are busy with achieving their departmental and organizational objectives and need every staff's effort every hour of the workday to achieve those objectives.

Therefore, taking a staff out of their work, from a manager's perspective, is not a necessary activity. That is simply because they do not appreciate the importance of learning for business profits and organizational growth.

However, if managers really appreciate the benefits of learning transfer which would boost performance and help employees grow and achieve departmental and organizational objectives more effectively, they will be learning advocates and will do their best to support learning and learning transfer. They would also help L&D function to ensure learning transfer.

- **Getting buy-in**

Learners who have supportive team leaders are more likely to exhibit the learned skills 42-52 % more often than those who do not have support from their managers (Sookhai and Budworth, 2010). Therefore, getting the buy-in and support from managers is crucial for learning transfer.

Research by Sookhai and Budworth (2010) showed that training managers on how to support their subordinates to utilize their learned skills resulted in employees feeling more supported, perceiving the workplace more positively, and having higher rates of learning transfer.

To get the buy-in from line managers, they should first value the importance of learning and transfer of that learning, and then be trained themselves on how to support trainers transfer their learning and get a positive training experience. If, however, there is no training offered to managers, they could attend the same intervention with the employees; that would give them a better understanding of what support they can offer (Connolly, 2022).

Nevertheless, managers who did not get trained on supporting transfer of learning, nor participate in the training with subordinates would only focus on tasks and objectives they have planned for and will not support transfer of learning.

- **Involvement in training:**

For a line manager to support transfer of learning, they need to be involved in the training. For example, before the learning intervention, L&D communicates with line managers to ask them about the challenges they face in terms of skills and behaviors that could be solved through the intervention. Additionally, their feedback is also necessary after the intervention to be adopted and to improve L&D interventions.

As such, line managers will value the importance of learning and its transfer and will be advocates for the L&D interventions to bridge performance gaps they face. Otherwise, they would perceive training as a burden and getting their employees out of productivity.

- **Defining the need:**

When an individual knows that a certain element is a part of their job description, and they are evaluated against, they are more likely to be keen on achieving that element. Therefore, supporting transfer of learning should be a key element of the manager's job description and incorporated into their performance objectives. The performance metric for supporting team members learning must be clearly defined and measured. For example, a SMART measure for line manager's subordinates' performance is clearly defined.

Nonetheless, if the need for supporting a team's learning is not clear, managers would focus on achieving other objectives and neglect members' training. For example, if the job description says that a manager needs to manage the team effectively to perform well, this vagueness will not encourage the manager to support learning.

- **Talking the same language:**

L&D should use the terminology line managers use to get their support in learning transfer. For example, terms like ROI, improved productivity, and performance growth are key interests to line managers. If L&D talked in that language with line managers, they would be supportive of learning transfer, as they would relate to that language. However, if L&D do not have the same ground as line managers, there will be difficulty to be on the same page of learning transfer.

For L&D to support line managers with the transfer of learning to their subordinates they should support line managers with regular one-to-one coaching to help them make the best of learning their subordinates are acquiring. They also help line managers understand staff needs and how their skills should be improved (Cegos, 2015).



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