



The Triple Win

The Missing Link in Improving the Effectiveness of Training Programs

by David C. Forman

We know many things about individuals and learning. For example, we know about effective instructional design, the strengths of different educational media and methods, the importance of involving learners in their own learning, the use of interactivity, and the value of well-constructed feedback. There are excellent references that summarize key research and practical guidelines to make learning and training more effective for individuals, such as Clark and Meyer (2003) and Stolovitch and Keeps (2003). There are still more important frontiers to explore and understand, but there is a body of knowledge and practice that separates good from bad training for individuals.

We also know many things about organizational development (OD) and change initiatives. These focus not on the individual but on the use and deployment of the combined, intangible capital of the organization. We know that it is difficult to move the culture, consciousness, structure, and collective capabilities of an organization. Accumulated weight, tradition, and directional force are difficult to alter. Consider the following indicators:

- 67% of corporate quality improvement initiatives end with no result.
- 75% of organizational re-engineering efforts have not been successful.
- Only 17% of mergers and acquisitions have produced any enduring business value.

- 88% of software development projects are cancelled, late, or over budget (Forman, 2003).

We also know that a critical difference between leading and mediocre companies is the ability to implement and execute strategy. Great companies can implement strategy and change direction; average companies cannot. It is the substance of a strategy that is perhaps less vital than the ability of a company to implement the selected strategy (Becker and Huselid, 2003). Covey (2003) has similarly noted that organizations have no lack of vision or smarts, yet they fail when they cannot execute. He calls not for more IQ, but XQ, which he describes as “execution know-how.”

What we do *not* know much about is the effectiveness of training as a change initiative within organizations. Training is a critical organizational development activity that seeks to achieve the company’s business and strategic objectives by improving the knowledge, skills, and performance levels of employees. However, if training initiatives enjoy the same level of success as corporate quality, re-engineering, and strategy implementations, then training programs are likely to be slightly effective at best. A primary reason for the lack of success of training is that insufficient attention and expertise is paid to the difficult, time-consuming, and nitty-gritty activity of implementation.

Implementing a training program is more than simply offering a class or self-paced training product. Effective implementation includes offering training programs but also helping to ensure their effective use, supporting the integration of training with work and cultures, and assisting in institutionalizing the training solution. The end goal is that the new skills and performance are transparent and become part of “the new way of doing business.” Implementation is not an event; it is a process that requires expertise, attention, and tools (see Figure 1).

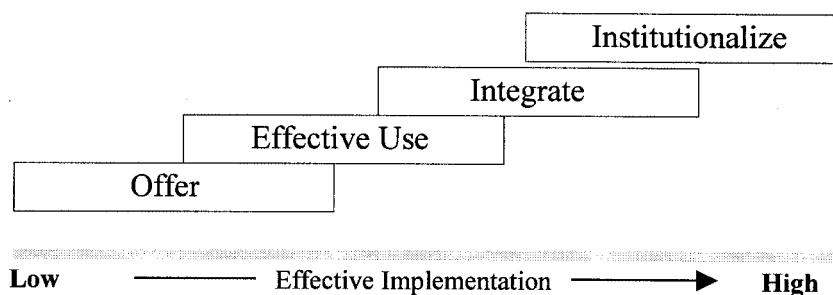


Figure 1. Implementation Continuum.

Traditional training vendors have ignored this area of implementation because their interest is to sell high-margin training products, not to help implement organizational change (Forman, 2003). Educational technologists have gravitated away from this area because their focus is on the individual and learning, not on such pragmatic issues as OD. The company itself often overlooks these issues because training implementation is not a traditional job role. On the other hand, high-priced consultants are often brought in to implement re-engineering and change projects, but they usually address the “hard” implementation aspects of these projects such as “getting the technology to work” or writing procedures and developing systems. The “soft” aspects of change get ignored, despite the fact that most change initiatives fail precisely because of these “soft” personal, cultural, and value issues (Evans, Pucik, & Barsoux, 2002).

There is a void in our training tools and techniques. There is a lack of practical models and frameworks, and as a result, training frequently fails to fulfill its intended purpose. When training is successful, it is typically due to the efforts and perseverance of a few dedicated and passionate people, rather than to the application of principles and frameworks that can be leveraged and enhanced. There is nothing akin to practical frameworks such as Kirkpatrick’s four levels of evaluation (Kirkpatrick, 1975) or the McKinsey 7S strategy framework, as opposed to their design and development (Society for Human Resources Management, 2003) for the implementation of training programs. There are bromides such as getting executive support, marketing aggressively, and linking training to strategic goals, but these offer little continuing practical guidance. There is no common language yet, let alone an accepted view of what should be done to properly implement training programs so that organizational change can be achieved.

This article presents a simple, intuitive framework—the triple win—that can be used in the lexicon of training implementation. Its foundation is both in training and OD practices. This dual heritage is important because each perspective is insufficient: Training methods often ignore organizational realities and contexts, while OD can gloss over

factors that are important to training and learning. There are provisions in instructional systems models for workplace analysis and implementation parameters, but these are usually not extensive in comparison to other parts of the models. Additionally, educational technologists are not often familiar with organizational context issues. However, these issues can directly affect the success or failure of even the most advanced training solution. This nexus between instructional development and OD is where problems occur. It is the “black hole” between areas of expertise, tradition, and responsibility.

The essential premise of the triple win is that training programs can only be effectively implemented if there are clear and demonstrable benefits (wins) for three key constituencies: the company, the individual, and the individual’s manager.

Each of these training program constituencies must be able to articulate the answer to the question of what is in it for me (WIIFM). This useful acronym has been around for decades but is rarely used. A parallel acronym is WSISMT—or why should I spend my time? These are not merely conventions; they strike right to the heart of a major training and performance problem. When there are clear and convincing answers to these questions, training programs are more smoothly implemented and integrated into the organization.

Implementation, Evaluation, and Level 0

While implementation tools and techniques have received scant attention in the literature, except for the recent work by Cross and Dublin (2002), there is a burgeoning literature in training evaluation, return on investment, and cost-benefit analysis. Books, seminars, and keynote conference speakers abound on evaluation benchmarks, return on investment, and metrics. These studies and practical findings are doubtlessly useful, but they all assume that learners take and are receptive to the training message. This may not be the case at all.

A case in point is an evaluation that details cost savings for a self-paced e-learning program versus classroom training.

Level 0: Did you complete the educational program?
 Level 1: Did you like it?
 Level 2: Have you learned from it?
 Level 3: Is job performance affected?
 Level 4: Have business results been impacted?
 Level 5: Was it worth the investment?

Figure 2. Key Questions by Level of Evaluation.

This type of evaluation is easy to perform, often shows a significant cost savings, is popular with executives, and is essentially meaningless by itself. What good are the cost savings if most people are not completing or amenable to learning from the training program?

Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation (Kirkpatrick, 1975) have provided a useful framework for decades. It has enabled educators to speak a common language and to think about different types of program outcomes. It has also shown the important dependent relationship between successive levels in the model. Phillips (1997) has added a fifth level to emphasize the role of return on investment over and above the category of business results. There needs to be a similar addition to the beginning of Kirkpatrick's model to accommodate for implementation differences, and therefore a Level 0 is proposed.

Level 0 pertains to learners completion of the educational program. This forms the foundation for the rest of the stages in the model. The practical questions that relate to these stages appear in Figure 2.

If the answer to any one of these key evaluation questions is no, the answers to the previous questions can help isolate the problem and address the situation. For example, if no difference is observable in job performance (Level 3), the reasons may be that learning did not occur, the course was not interesting or relevant, or the program was not completed. This logic works best when a level (Level 0) is devoted to the act of using and completing the course and not simply assuming that this has occurred. Level 0 also recognizes the importance and foundational role of training implementation: If it is not effective, the other levels do not matter.

The Double-Win Matrix

At the heart of training implementation is learner motivation. If learners are motivated and interested in participating in training, then implementation is greatly enhanced. If they are not, the program suffers. Perhaps nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in the distinction between training that is *prescribed* and *subscribed*.

Prescribed training is the prevailing model in corporate America. It is based on a unilateral decision by someone to

send others to training. Learners are assigned to training classes and, at times, may even be unsure why, other than the fact that they received an email from their manager. This situation is not always the case (there are excellent examples of company-required training), but it occurs often enough.

In *subscribed* training, the learner decides what to do and how to spend time. Just as one would subscribe to a magazine or a cable television service, the learner chooses which training program to take. Occasionally the individual pays for the training; in other situations the company pays for training that the individual can choose to attend.

In subscribed training the learner makes a choice and a commitment; in prescribed training, he or she does not. Motivation, passion, and interest levels are totally different in the two situations. In classroom courses, the difference in participation and activity levels is palpable. Brownouts and dropouts are frequent in prescribed courses and much less often observed in subscribed training (Islam, 2002).

While individual employee motivation is vital, it is only part of the picture. Equally important are the benefits to the organization. A company-sponsored training program should have an intended organizational purpose and role. For the organization to respond, benefits must also be clear and compelling. A key way in which the organization responds is through support and sponsorship of leading executives. Top management only "signs on" if the payback is evident and meaningful.

The double-win matrix (see Figure 3) is a practical tool and framework that places the individual on one axis and the company on the other, with four quadrants based on low to high motivation levels. At a glance, it is easy to see and compare the benefits for each audience.

Prescribed training usually begins in the quadrant that is high in company motivation but low for the individual. An example is compliance training, which the company chooses to conduct because it will save money or avoid lawsuits, though it probably has little value to the individual. Certification programs are examples of training courses that are high on individual motivation but often low for the company: Certification is often perceived as a résumé booster that makes individuals more attractive to other companies and more prone to job shopping.

Three of the four quadrants depict unsuccessful training implementations. Single wins by either the individual or the company are better than no wins at all, but single wins rarely last. The individual win may not benefit the collective enterprise and therefore eventually loses its funding and support, while the company win can be hollow without individual commitment and attention.

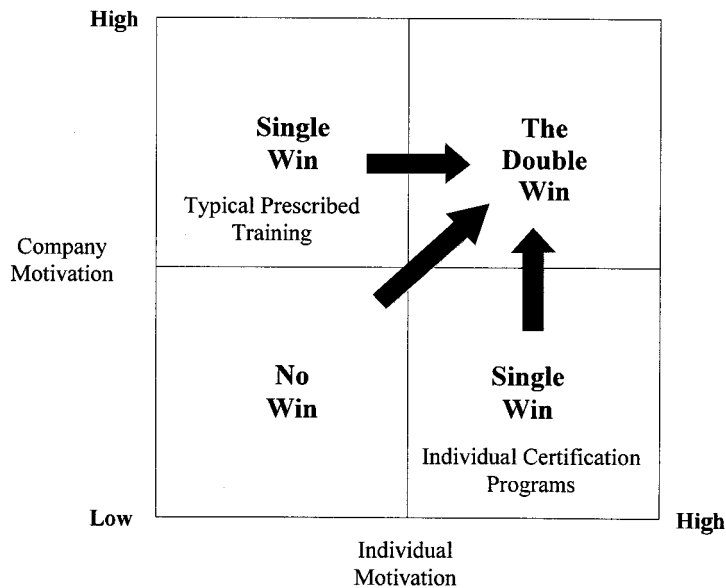


Figure 3. The Double-Win Matrix.

The aim is to migrate to the double win, a training program that has benefits and demonstrable value both for the individual and the company. Double wins endure. Cross and Dublin (2002) refer to the common area between learner and company as a “success zone.” More success zones need to be created for training programs to achieve their intended promise. A successful example may be seen when information technology consulting companies encourage and support employees to obtain their technical certifications. These certifications are good both for the individual and the company. The company can use certifications as a testament to their commitment to provide the highest quality (i.e., fully certified) consultants on engagements; as a result their rates for certified professionals are also typically higher so engagements are more profitable.

Another example of a double win may be cross-cultural training provided to individuals before they embark on an international assignment for the company. This type of training is a win for the company because it helps ensure that the employee can adapt to different cultural and national contexts and not become disillusioned while abroad. Losing a valuable employee can cost the company hundreds of thousands of dollars, to say nothing of the message it sends to others in the host and home countries. Cross-cultural training is a win for the employee because there is an immediate and practical need to

be able to live and work in a different culture. In addition, a successful international assignment is an important step in assuming global leadership roles, so this type of cross-cultural training potentially impacts a person’s career development (Evans et al., 2002).

Benefits for the Organization and Individual

The way to ascend to the double win is to establish tangible and meaningful benefits for specific training programs for both the company and the individual. These benefits must be real to each constituency, and not prescribed or imposed by others. They must also be practical and achievable, not unrealistic or ephemeral.

The benefits for a company seem simple but can become complex quickly. The familiar financial benefits are often supported by other leading indicators that are equally important to company executives, such as those in Figure 4. In many cases, these same benefits also are part of the return on investment analysis conducted after the program implementation.

The benefits for the individual are also varied. They can be grouped into the following nonexclusive categories:

- **Career development:** If the training program is seen as helping to advance a person’s present and future career development, then motivation levels are likely to be high. Substantial data show that opportunity for career development activities is a major reason employees select a company to work for in the first place (Johnson, 2000). It is important to recognize that career development

TYPE OF BENEFIT	EXAMPLES
Financial	Revenues Sales Profits Shareholder return
Company Reputation and Positioning	Competitive positioning Reputation Market brand Employment brand
Operational	Cycle times Cost reductions Quality improvements Inventory turns
Human Capital	Talent acquisition Retention of key employees Knowledge sharing and collaboration Time to competency Ability to innovate
Customer	Customer satisfaction Customer loyalty/retention Referrals Lifetime value of a customer

Figure 4. Company Benefits.

may pertain to short-term tenure with a particular company or longer-term views of the profession.

- **Job proficiency:** Individuals want to be successful. They do not like to fail, struggle, or be perceived as incompetent. If training directly contributes to competence and improved job performance, then learners are more likely to be motivated to take the training course. If this immediate job proficiency benefit also coincides with career development advantages, then interest levels are even higher.
- **Personal development:** Even when links between career development and job proficiency are not apparent, motivation can be prevalent if training is deemed personally valuable (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2002). For example, a person could want to know about special Internet search techniques, new data privacy statutes, or the latest interviewing techniques; even though this knowledge has no direct link to current job requirements. These new skills could be called on in personal, community, informal, or even future job contexts, and the impetus to learn them exists, even if the benefits are not immediate.
- **Rewards and incentives:** The first three types of motivation are related to the topic and substance of the training program and how it relates to one's career, job, and personal interests. These can be thought of as intrinsic motivational factors. There are also extrinsic factors that pertain to the environment and are independent of the content of the training program. Examples of extrinsic factors are pay, better working conditions, additional benefits, social incentives, financial incentives (in addition to pay), and performance management practices. Two effective performance management practices involve including training as an objective in the performance appraisal and providing enticing and challenging assignments for those who complete training. According to Clark (2003, p. 31), the latest research indicates that financial incentives are very effective when used properly, whereas social incentives such as "employee of the week" do not make much difference in performance.

Benefits for the company and the individual must be real and tangible. They must also clearly be communicated and understood. Tacit benefits have little value because they can be misunderstood, poorly applied, or even ignored.

The Triple Win

Building value simultaneously for the individual and the company is an important step forward. If these benefits are not formulated up front and persuasively communicated, training programs will be no more effective than the sputtering re-engineering and quality initiatives that have dotted the landscape of corporate America. But the double win by itself isn't enough. Another important constituency must become part of the picture.

The reality is that there is not a direct line of communication from the company to the individual employee. There is an intermediary that translates, filters, supports, or discourages the change initiative. In many organizations there can be four to eight layers between the executive management and the employee. A great deal of confusion can occur between a single handoff or layer, let alone half a dozen. An employee's direct manager plays a significant role in all change initiatives, both as a translator of the messages from company management and as a supporter of or impediment to employee change.

Many change initiatives have been scuttled or at least slowed because of lack of mid-level management support. Organizational development professionals are well aware of the power and influence of this audience; many educational and performance technologists are not as concerned because their focus is elsewhere. A military analogy might be the essential role of the noncommissioned officer. It is unthinkable to imagine any change initiative for soldiers that could succeed without the thorough endorsement and support of sergeants and noncommissioned officers.

The employer-manager relationship is perhaps the most vital within the organization. The manager becomes the image of the company, and the strength of this relationship is a major determinant in deciding the success and eventual fate of the employee. The number one reason why an employee decides to stay or leave a company is the manager-employee relationship (Johnson, 2000). Instead of ignoring managers in employee change initiatives and training programs, managers' primary role must be both recognized and cultivated.

The benefit equation for managers is similar yet different from that of individual employees. There must be clear benefits for managers to answer WIIFM or WSISMT. These benefits can be grouped in the same categories of career development, job performance, personal development, and rewards/incentives for managers. But for managers, there are other factors beyond those that pertain to individual employees that impact their support and performance:

- **Credibility:** This refers to the manager's status within the organization. If the new training program alters the power or perceived value of managers, then it will likely encounter resistance.
- **Role:** If the training program changes the role of the manager or type of employee-manager interaction, then managers must learn these behaviors and new rules of engagement. The benefits for this new way of interacting must be clear and demonstrable; if not, managers will likely revert to old ways and practices and not reinforce or support the new training program.
- **Inclusion:** If managers are not involved in formulating or sanctioning training programs for their employees, then they will likely not support the initiative. There

are too many examples of corporate programs that bypass the manager level and stumble in subsequent implementation and integration.

The triple win, therefore, includes benefits for the company, the individual employee, and the employee's manager. At the beginning of each proposed training program, the triple-win chart should be completed. If a constituency does not have demonstrable benefits, then the project team should think long and hard about continuing. If benefits for one or more constituency are not particularly compelling, then it is useful to think about what else could be done to produce a "win" for that audience. Figure 5 arrays the three constituencies and the category of benefits for each. The specific wins should be completed for each training project initiative for all three constituencies.

Final Thoughts

The triple-win framework is an implementation tool that can improve the use and integration of training programs. The framework is to be completed as early as possible in the formulation of the training program. It may seem counterintuitive that an implementation tool is to be completed before the training is offered. In the analyze-design-develop-implement-evaluate instructional design model, for example, implementation by definition comes after the design and development of the training program. While it is true that a training program is implemented after it has been developed, it is also true that steps taken early in design and development stages can greatly facilitate a successful implementation.

The automobile industry understands this relationship very clearly. Students of the automobile manufacturing process in the 1980s were amazed at the success of Japanese companies in reducing time to market and rollout of new product models. US companies were taking almost twice as long to move cars from concept to customer. While there were several reasons for Japan's success, one major cause was the consensus that was established among all employees involved at the beginning of a new automotive project. US companies did not spend enough time on this initial phase, instead hurrying to development and production. But as time passed, people became confused about their roles and what to do. The Japanese manufacturers spent more time up front gaining consensus and agreement, and as a result, employees were more committed and their activities better

CONSTITUENCY	CATEGORY OF BENEFIT	LIST WINS HERE
The Company	Financial Company Reputation and Positioning Operational Human Capital Customer	
The Employee	Career Development Job Performance Personal Development Rewards and Incentives	
The Manager	Career Development Job Performance Personal Development Rewards and Incentives	<hr/> Mitigating Factors: Credibility Role Inclusion

Figure 5. Worksheet: The Triple-Win.

orchestrated. This demonstrates that spending weeks up front planning can shed months, if not years, from product implementation and rollout.

The triple-win framework is a tool to drive more successful implementations of training programs. Its premise is simple: Organizations are likely to provide—and people are likely to use—that which is of value to them. If value can be clearly and convincingly demonstrated, then motivation levels will be high and the cycle of failed change initiatives and training programs can be broken. By starting to think about implementation issues first, instead of last, then the tie between instructional development and OD is strengthened and training programs have a greater likelihood of achieving their goals. 🧠

References

Becker, B., & Huselid, M. (2003, December). Measuring HR? Benchmarking is not the answer. *HR Magazine*.

Clark, R. (2003, December). In: Galagan, P. The future of the profession formerly known as training. *T+D*, pp. 27-38.

Clark, R., & Meyer, R. (2003). *E-learning and the science of instruction*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.

Covey, S. (2003). Developing XQ-execution intelligence. *Chief Learning Officer*.

Cross, J., & Dublin, L. (2002). *Implementing e-learning*. Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development.

Evans, P., Pucik, V., & Barsoux, J. (2002). *The global challenge: Frameworks for international human resource management*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

Forman, D. (2003). *Facts and figures from the worlds of e-learning, training, work and jobs* [On-line]. Available: www.sagelearning.com.

Forman, D. (2003, January). Reinventing the training business. *Performance Improvement*, 42(1), 40-44.

Islam, K. (2002, May). Why e-learning is floundering. *E-Learning*, pp. 22-26.

Kirkpatrick, D. (1975). Techniques for evaluating training programs. In: *Evaluating training programs*. Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development.

Johnson, M. (2000). *Winning the people wars: Talent and the battle for human capital*. London: Financial Times Prentice Hall.

Phillips, J. (1997). *Handbook of training evaluation and measurement methods*. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company.

Stolovitch, H., & Keeps, E. (2003). *Telling ain't training*. Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development.

Society for Human Resource Management. (2003). *SHRM global learning system*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

David C. Forman is Founder and President of Sage Learning Systems. He has spent 25 years in the training and learning industry and has worked closely in designing, developing, and implementing interactive learning systems for 40 of the Fortune 100 companies. David has recently completed a new global learning system for the Society for Human Resource Management in support of its new GPHR certification. In addition to consulting and development projects, David has authored more than 30 books and articles on training, evaluation, instructional design, and return on investment, and has presented at major industry conferences and seminars, both in the United States and abroad. He may be reached at dforman1@cox.net.



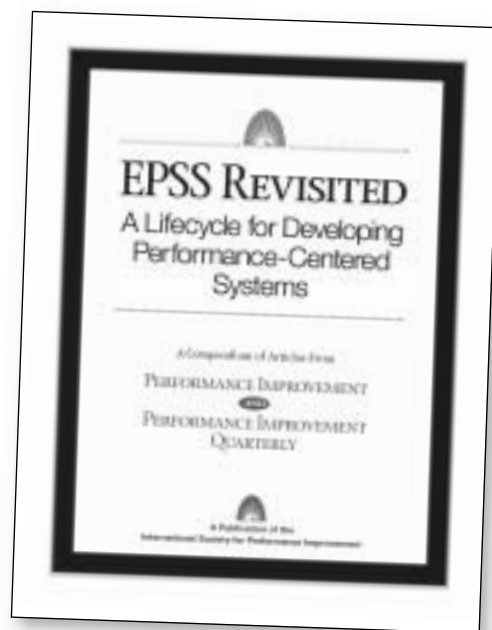
Visit the ISPI Online Bookstore Today!

Important Performance Improvement Book Available

EPSS Revisited

Edited by Gary J. Dickelman

EPSS Revisited is an essential reader for students and practitioners of performance-centered design (PCD). Its chapters support each element of the performance-centered systems development lifecycle. From job aids and "bolt on" EPSS to ground-up enterprise performance-centered systems, readers will find gems in terms of methodology, industry trends, and a plethora of real-world examples of PCD. The best and brightest come together in roundtable discussions and interviews on the state-of-the-PCD practice and the evolution of knowledge management as an integral component of PCD. *EPSS Revisited* promises to be the seminal work on ensuring business and organizational performance through human performance in our ever-growing world of computer-mediated knowledge work.



www.ispi.org • Click the Bookstore link found at the top of any ISPI web page.