

# PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR CLOSING THE GAP

BETWEEN

## LEARNING AND ACHIEVING



Our mentor, Dr. Paul Hersey, used to explain the variables associated with effective leadership through the eyes of this equation:

$$L(e) = f(S) F; TM; P; OC; E; E \dots$$

*(Leadership effectiveness is a function of the situation; the follower; top management; the follower's peers; organizational culture; the economy; etc.)*

As he used to put it, "There is any number of forces that could help or hinder a leader's attempt to influence, but if the follower decides not to follow, nothing else much matters." We would like to recycle that wisdom as we offer our thoughts on "minding the gap" between a successful training event and the transfer of that training into sustained learner behavior change that produces targeted results.

In full acknowledgement of the numerous other forces in play with the successful transfer of training, let's zero in on the specific roles of two primary stakeholders, the trainee and his/her next-level manager (NLM), across three virtually unwavering periods of time (phases) associated with every training event.

### PHASE I: BEFORE TRAINING (ONE TO TWO WEEKS)

**NLM:** Initiates a training-related discussion with the trainee to cover the following:

- Ensure the trainee is aware that participation in "the event" is an investment on the part of the organization, and directly tied to job-related skill development and

application. ("You will learn things that can accelerate your development and positively impact the productivity of your team.")

- Establish the expectation that, after training, the trainee will review with the NLM what was learned, how it will be applied and how increases in productivity could be measured. ("I want to meet again, soon after you return, to review what you learned, how you plan to apply it and anything I can do to help you in that regard.")

Our experience suggests that this conversation takes about 10 minutes, and the NLM does not have to be well-versed in the content of the training itself.

### TRAINEES SHOULD BE MOTIVATED TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN TRAINING.

**TRAINEE:** Reviews the objectives of the training (at a minimum) and participates in the Phase I discussion with his/her NLM. In general terms, the trainee should have at least some idea of what they can learn and how they can apply it to increase productivity. Primarily, the trainee should be motivated to take an active role in the training event after Phase I.

### PHASE II: DURING TRAINING

**NLM:** Ensures the trainee can attend and participate in the training event unencumbered by the demands of his/her job-related responsibilities. Operationally, the trainee's absence needs to be treated like sick leave,

vacation or any other time an employee is deemed "unavailable."

**TRAINEE:** Keeping the post-event discussion with their NLM in mind, engages throughout the training to the upmost of their ability, then takes personal responsibility for transforming a general sense of how the training might apply to a specific set of actions that can be taken to implement skills and measure the work-related impact.

### PHASE III: AFTER TRAINING (ONE TO TWO WEEKS)

**NLM:** Initiates a follow-up discussion with the trainee to cover the following:

- Find out what the trainee learned and how he/she envisions transferring that learning to the workplace. This would include the nature and the timing associated with measuring the impact of that implementation.
- Identify the NLM's role moving forward as it applies to the objective of training transfer (i.e., will the NLM be providing guidance? Be available for discussion? Or, periodically monitor progress from a distance?).

**TRAINEE:** Reviews plans to apply on-the-job learning with the NLM and transparently "contracts for a leadership style" regarding that implementation. 🔄

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