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EVALUATING TRAINING PROGRAMS

THIRD EDITION



THE FOUR LEVELS

An Excerpt From

Evaluating Training Programs

by Donald L. Kirkpatrick and James D. Kirkpatrick
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Chapter 1

Evaluating: Part of a Ten-Step Process

The reason for evaluating is to determine the effectiveness of a training program. When the evaluation is done, we can hope that the results are positive and gratifying, both for those responsible for the program and for upper-level managers who will make decisions based on their evaluation of the program. Therefore, much thought and planning need to be given to the program itself to make sure that it is effective. Later chapters discuss the reasons for evaluating and supply descriptions, guidelines, and techniques for evaluating at the four levels. This chapter is devoted to suggestions for planning and implementing the program to ensure its effectiveness. More details can be found in my book *Developing Managers and Team Leaders* (Woburn, MA: Butterworth Heinemann, 2001).

Each of the following factors should be carefully considered when planning and implementing an effective training program:

1. Determining needs
2. Setting objectives
3. Determining subject content
4. Selecting participants
5. Determining the best schedule
6. Selecting appropriate facilities
7. Selecting appropriate instructors
8. Selecting and preparing audiovisual aids
9. Coordinating the program
10. Evaluating the program

Suggestions for implementing each of these factors follow.

Determining Needs

If programs are going to be effective, they must meet the needs of participants. There are many ways to determine these needs. Here are some of the more common:

1. Ask the participants.
2. Ask the bosses of the participants.
3. Ask others who are familiar with the job and how it is being performed, including subordinates, peers, and customers.
4. Test the participants.
5. Analyze performance appraisal forms.

Participants, bosses, and others can be asked in interviews or by means of a survey. Interviews provide more detailed information, but they require much more time. A simple survey form can provide almost as much information and do it in a much more efficient manner.

A survey form, such as the one shown in Exhibit 1.1, can be readily developed to determine the needs seen both by participants and by their bosses. The topics to be considered can be determined by interviews or simply by answering the question, What are all the possible subjects that will help our people to do their best? The resulting list becomes the survey form.

As Exhibit 1.1 indicates, participants are asked to complete the survey by putting a check in one of three columns for each item. This is a much better process than having them list their needs in order of importance or simply writing down the topics that they feel will help them to do their job better. It is important to have them evaluate each topic so that the responses can be quantified.

After you tabulate their responses, the next step is to weight these sums to get a weighted score for each topic. The first column, *Of great need*, should be given a weight of 2; the second column, *Of some need*, should be given a weight of 1; and the last column, a weight of 0. The weighted score can then be used to arrive at a rank order for individual needs. If two topics are tied for third, the next rank is fifth, not

Exhibit 1.1. Survey of Training Needs

In order to determine which subjects will be of the greatest help to you in improving your job performance, we need your input. Please indicate your need for each subject by placing an X in the appropriate column.

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Of great need</i>	<i>Of some need</i>	<i>Of no need</i>
1. Diversity in the workforce—understanding employees			
2. How to motivate employees			
3. Interpersonal communications			
4. Written communication			
5. Oral communication			
6. How to manage time			
7. How to delegate effectively			
8. Planning and organizing			
9. Handling complaints and grievances			
10. How to manage change			
11. Decision making and empowerment			
12. Leadership styles—application			
13. Performance appraisal			
14. Coaching and counseling			
15. How to conduct productive meetings			
16. Building teamwork			
17. How to discipline			
18. Total quality improvement			
19. Safety			
20. Housekeeping			
21. How to build morale—quality of work life (QWL)			
22. How to reward performance			
23. How to train employees			
24. How to reduce absenteeism and tardiness			
25. Other topics of great need			
1.			
2.			

fourth, and if three needs have tied for seventh, the next rank is tenth. This rank order provides training professionals with data on which to determine priorities. Exhibit 1.2 illustrates the tabulations and the rank order.

The same form can be used to determine the needs seen by the bosses of the supervisors. The only change is in the instructions on the form, which should read: "In order to determine which subjects would be of greatest benefit to supervisors to help improve their performance, we need your input. Please put an X in one of the three columns after each subject to indicate the needs of your subordinates as you see them. Tabulations of this survey will be compared with the needs that they see to decide the priority of the subjects to be offered."

There will be a difference of opinion on some subjects. For example, in a manufacturing organization, the subject of housekeeping might be rated low by supervisors and high by their bosses. Other topics, such as motivation, will probably be given a high rating by both groups. In order to make the final decision on the priority of the subjects to be offered, it is wise to use an advisory committee of managers representing different departments and levels within the organization. The training professional can show the committee members the results of the survey and ask for their input. Their comments and suggestions should be considered to be advisory, and the training professional should make the final decision.

Participation by an advisory committee accomplishes four purposes:

1. Helps to determine subject content for training programs.
2. Informs committee members of the efforts of the training department to provide practical help.
3. Provides empathy regarding the needs seen by their subordinates.
4. Stimulates support of the programs by involving them in the planning.

The use of tests and inventories is another approach for determining needs. There are two practical ways of doing this. One way is to determine the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that a supervisor should have and develop the subject content accordingly. Then develop a test

Exhibit 1.2. Tabulating Responses to Survey of Training Needs

In order to determine which subjects will be of the greatest help to you in improving your job performance, we need your input. Please indicate your need for each subject by placing an X in the appropriate column.

<i>Rank order</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Weighted score</i>	<i>Of great need</i>	<i>Of some need</i>	<i>Of no need</i>
13	1. Diversity in the workforce— understanding employees	40	15	10	5
4	2. How to motivate employees	51	22	7	1
6	3. Interpersonal communications	48	20	8	2
18	4. Written communication	33	11	11	8
23	5. Oral communication	19	6	7	17
10	6. How to manage time	44	17	10	3
20	7. How to delegate effectively	29	9	11	10
20	8. Planning and organizing	29	6	17	7
14	9. Handling complaints and grievances	39	13	13	4
1	10. How to manage change	56	26	4	0
3	11. Decision making and empowerment	53	24	5	1
6	12. Leadership styles—application	48	19	10	1
16	13. Performance appraisal	36	12	12	6
16	14. Coaching and counseling	36	8	20	2
20	15. How to conduct productive meetings	29	8	13	9
2	16. Building teamwork	55	25	5	0
9	17. How to discipline	47	18	11	1
14	18. Total quality improvement	39	13	13	4
11	19. Safety	43	15	13	2
23	20. Housekeeping	19	6	7	17
5	21. How to build morale—quality of work life (QWL)	50	22	6	2
12	22. How to reward performance	41	17	7	6
6	23. How to train employees	48	19	10	1
19	24. How to reduce absenteeism and tardiness	31	11	9	10
	25. Other topics of great need 1. 2.				

Note: Tabulated responses from thirty first-level supervisors.

that measures the knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and give it to participants as a pretest. An analysis of the results will provide information regarding subject content.

The other approach is to purchase a standardized instrument that relates closely to the subject matter being taught. The sixty-five-item Management Inventory on Managing Change (available from Donald L. Kirkpatrick, 842 Kirkland Ct., Pewaukee, WI 53072) is such an instrument. Here are some of the items in it:

1. If subordinates participate in the decision to make a change, they are usually more enthusiastic in carrying it out.
2. Some people are not anxious to be promoted to a job that has more responsibility.
3. Decisions to change should be based on opinions as well as on facts.
4. If a change is going to be unpopular with your subordinates, you should proceed slowly in order to obtain acceptance.
5. It is usually better to communicate with a group concerning a change than to talk to its members individually.
6. Empathy is one of the most important concepts in managing change.
7. It's a good idea to sell a change to the natural leader before trying to sell it to the others.
8. If you are promoted to a management job, you should make the job different from what it was under your predecessor.
9. Bosses and subordinates should have an understanding regarding the kinds of changes that the subordinate can implement without getting prior approval from the boss.
10. You should encourage your subordinates to try out any changes that they feel should be made.

Respondents are asked to agree or disagree with each statement. The "correct" answers were determined by the author to cover concepts, principles, and techniques for managing change. It is important to note that the possible answers are "agree" or "disagree" and not "true" or "false."

Five other standardized inventories are available from the source just named: Supervisory Inventory on Communication, Supervisory Inventory on Human Relations, Management Inventory on Time

Management, Management Inventory on Performance Appraisal and Coaching, and Management Inventory on Leadership, Motivation, and Decision Making.

Many other approaches are available for determining needs. Two of the most practical—surveying participants and their bosses and giving a pretest to participants before the program is run—have just been described.

Setting Objectives

Once the needs have been determined, it is necessary to set objectives. Objectives should be set for three different aspects of the program and in the following order:

1. What results are we trying to accomplish? These results can be stated in such terms as production, quality, turnover, absenteeism, morale, sales, profits, and return on investment (ROI).
2. What behaviors are needed to accomplish these desired results?
3. What knowledge, skills, and attitudes are necessary to achieve the desired behaviors?

The training program curriculum is then based on accomplishing no. 3. In some programs, only increased knowledge is needed. In others, new or improved skills are necessary. And in some, change in attitudes is what is needed. Diversity training is an example of a program whose objective it is to change attitudes.

Determining Subject Content

Needs and objectives are prime factors when determining subject content. Trainers should ask themselves the question, What topics should be presented to meet the needs and accomplish the objectives? The answers to this question establish the topics to be covered. Some modifications may be necessary depending on the qualifications of the trainers who will present the program and on the training budget.

For example, the subject of managing stress may be important, but the instructors available are not qualified, and there is no money to hire a qualified leader or buy videotapes and/or packaged programs on the subject. Other pertinent topics then become higher priorities.

Selecting Participants

When selecting participants for a program, four decisions need to be made:

1. Who can benefit from the training?
2. What programs are required by law or by government edict?
3. Should the training be voluntary or compulsory?
4. Should the participants be segregated by level in the organization, or should two or more levels be included in the same class?

In answer to the first question, all levels of management can benefit from training programs. Obviously, some levels can benefit more than others. The answer to the second question is obvious. Regarding the third question, I recommend that at least some basic programs be compulsory for first-level supervisors if not also for others. If a program is voluntary, many who need the training may not sign up, either because they feel they don't need it or because they don't want to admit that they need it. Those who are already good supervisors and have little need for the program can still benefit from it, and they can also help to train the others. This assumes, of course, that the program includes participatory activities on the part of attendees. To supplement the compulsory programs, other courses can be offered on a voluntary basis.

Some organizations have established a management institute that offers all courses on a voluntary basis. Training professionals may feel that this is the best approach. Or higher-level management may discourage compulsory programs. If possible, the needs of the supervisors, as determined by the procedures described in the preceding section, should become basic courses that should be compulsory. Others can be optional. The answer to the last question depends on

the climate and on the rapport that exists among different levels of management within the organization. The basic question is whether subordinates will speak freely in a training class if their bosses are present. If the answer is yes, then it is a good idea to have different levels in the same program. They all get the same training at the same time. But if the answer is no, then bosses should not be included in the program for supervisors. Perhaps you can give the same or a similar program to upper-level managers before offering it to the first-level supervisors.

Determining the Best Schedule

The best schedule takes three things into consideration: the trainees, their bosses, and the best conditions for learning. Many times, training professionals consider only their own preferences and schedules. An important scheduling decision is whether to offer the program on a concentrated basis—for example, as a solid week of training—or to spread it out over weeks or months. My own preference is to spread it out as an ongoing program. One good schedule is to offer a three-hour session once a month. Three hours leave you time for participation as well as for the use of videotapes and other aids. The schedule should be set and communicated well in advance. The day of the program and the specific time should be established to meet the needs and desires of both the trainees and their bosses. Line managers should be consulted regarding the best time and schedule.

I recently conducted a week-long training program for all levels of management at a company in Racine, Wisconsin. Two groups of twenty each attended the program. The first session each day was scheduled from 7:00 to 10:30 A.M. The repeat session for the other group was scheduled from 3:00 to 6:30 P.M. Racine was too far away to go home each day, and what do you do in Racine from 10:30 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. each day for a week? This is the worst schedule I ever had, but it was the best schedule for all three shifts of supervisors who attended. The point is, the training schedule must meet the needs and desires of the participants instead of the convenience of the instructors.

Selecting Appropriate Facilities

The selection of facilities is another important decision. Facilities should be both comfortable and convenient. Negative factors to be avoided include rooms that are too small, uncomfortable furniture, noise or other distractions, inconvenience, long distances to the training room, and uncomfortable temperature, either too hot or too cold. A related consideration has to do with refreshments and breaks. I conducted a training program on managing change for a large Minneapolis company. They provided participants with coffee and sweet rolls in the morning, a nice lunch at noon, and a Coke and cookie break in the afternoon. Participants came from all over the country, including Seattle. In order to save money on transportation and hotel, the company decided to take the program to Seattle, where it had a large operation. In Seattle, no refreshments were offered, and participants were on their own for lunch. Unfortunately, some peers of the participants had attended the same program in Minneapolis. These factors caused negative attitudes on the part of those attending. And these attitudes could have affected their motivation to learn as well as their feeling toward the organization and the training department in particular. Incidentally, more and more companies are offering fruit instead of sweet rolls and cookies at breaks.

Selecting Appropriate Instructors

The selection of instructors is critical to the success of a program. Their qualifications should include a knowledge of the subject being taught, a desire to teach, the ability to communicate, and skill at getting people to participate. They should also be “learner oriented”—have a strong desire to meet learner needs.

Budgets may limit the possibilities. For example, some organizations limit the selection to present employees, including the training director, the Human Resources manager, and line and staff managers. There is no money to hire outside leaders. Therefore, subject content needs to be tailored to the available instructors, or else instructors need to receive special training. If budgets allow, outside instructors can be hired if internal expertise is not available. The selection of these

instructors also requires care. Many organizations feel that they have been burned because they selected outside instructors who did a poor job. In order to be sure that a potential instructor will be effective, the best approach is to observe his or her performance in a similar situation. The next best approach is to rely on the recommendations of other training professionals who have already used the individual. A very unreliable method is to interview the person and make a decision based on your impressions.

I recently conducted a workshop for eighty supervisors and managers at St. Vincent Hospital in Indianapolis. I had been recommended to Frank Magliery, vice president of Operations, by Dave Neil of ServiceMaster. Dave had been in several of my sessions. In order to be sure that I was the right instructor, Frank attended another session that I did for ServiceMaster. He was able therefore not only to judge my effectiveness but also to offer suggestions about tailoring the training to his organization.

This is the kind of selection process that should be followed when you hire an outside consultant. It not only illustrates a process for selection but also emphasizes the importance of orienting an outside leader to the needs and desires of the specific organization.

Selecting and Preparing Audiovisual Aids

An audiovisual aid has two purposes: to help the leader maintain interest and to communicate. Some aids, hopefully only a few minutes long, are designed to attract interest and entertain. This is fine providing they develop a positive climate for learning. When renting or purchasing videotapes and packaged programs, take care to preview them first to be sure that the benefits for the program outweigh the cost. The extent to which such aids should become the main feature of a program depends on the instructor's knowledge and skills in developing his or her own subject content. Some organizations rely entirely on packaged programs because they have the budget but not the skills needed to develop and teach programs of their own. Other training professionals rely primarily on their own knowledge, skill, and materials, and rent or buy videos only as aids. Some organizations have a department that can make effective aids and provide the necessary

equipment. Other organizations have to rent or buy them. The important principle is that aids can be an important part of an effective program. Each organization should carefully make or buy the aids that will help it to maintain interest and communicate the message.

Coordinating the Program

Sometimes the instructor coordinates as well as teaches. In other situations a coordinator does not do the teaching. For those who coordinate and do not teach, there are two opposite approaches.

As an instructor, I have experienced two extremes in regard to coordination. At an eastern university offering continuing education, I had to introduce myself, find my way to the lunchroom at noon, tell participants where to go for breaks, conclude the program, and even ask participants to complete the reaction sheets. I couldn't believe that a university that prided itself on professional programming could do such a miserable job of coordinating.

The other extreme occurred in a program that I conducted for State Farm Insurance in Bloomington, Illinois. Steve Whittington and his wife took my wife, Fern, and me out to dinner the evening before the program. He picked me up at the hotel to take me to the training room in plenty of time to set the room up for the meeting. He made sure that I had everything I needed. He introduced me and stayed for the entire program, helping with handouts. He handled the breaks. He took me to lunch and, of course, paid for it. He concluded the meeting by thanking me and asking participants to complete reaction sheets. He took me back to the hotel and thanked me. In other words, he served as an effective coordinator who helped to make the meeting as effective as possible. Of course, the niceties that he included are not necessary for effective coordination, but they do illustrate that it is important to meet the needs of the instructor as well as of the participants.

Evaluating the Program

Details on evaluation are provided in the rest of the book.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, to ensure the effective-

ness of a training program, time and emphasis should be put on the planning and implementation of the program. These are critical if we are to be sure that, when the evaluation is done, the results are positive. Consideration of the concepts, principles, and techniques described in this chapter can help to ensure an effective program.

Chapter 2

Reasons for Evaluating

At a national conference of the National Society for Sales Training Executives (NSSTE), J. P. Huller of Hobart Corporation presented a paper on “evaluation.” In the introduction, he says, “All managers, not just those of us in training, are concerned with their own and their department’s credibility. I want to be accepted by my company. I want to be trusted by my company. I want to be respected by my company. I want my company and my fellow managers to say, ‘We need you.’”

“When you are accepted, trusted, respected, and needed, lots and lots of wonderful things happen:

- Your budget requests are granted.
- You keep your job. (You might even be promoted.)
- Your staff keep their jobs.
- The quality of your work improves.
- Senior management listens to your advice.
- You’re given more control.

“You sleep better, worry less, enjoy life more. . . . In short, it makes you happy.”

“Wonderful! But just how do we become accepted, trusted, respected, and needed? We do so by proving that we deserve to be accepted, trusted, respected, and needed. We do so by evaluating and reporting upon the worth of our training.”

This states in general terms why we need to evaluate training. Here are three specific reasons:

1. To justify the existence and budget of the training department by showing how it contributes to the organization's objectives and goals
2. To decide whether to continue or discontinue training programs
3. To gain information on how to improve future training programs

There is an old saying among training directors: When there are cutbacks in an organization, training people are the first to go. Of course, this isn't always true. However, whenever downsizing occurs, top management looks for people and departments that can be eliminated with the fewest negative results. Early in their decision, they look at such "overhead" departments as Training, commonly called Corporate University, and Human Resources, which typically includes Employment, Salary Administration, Benefits, and Labor Relations (if there is a union). In some organizations, top management feels that all these functions except training are necessary. From this perspective, training is optional, and its value to the organization depends on top executives' view of its effectiveness. Huller is right when he states that training people must earn trust and respect if training is to be an important function that an organization will want to retain even in a downsizing situation. In other words, trainers must justify their existence. If they don't and downsizing occurs, they may be terminated, and the training function will be relegated to the Human Resources manager, who already has many other hats to wear.

The second reason for evaluating is to determine whether you should continue to offer a program. The content of some programs may become obsolete. For example, programs on Work Simplification, Transactional Analysis, and Management by Objectives were "hot" topics in past years. Most organizations have decided to replace these with programs on current hot topics such as Diversity, Empowerment, and Team Building. Also, some programs, such as computer training, are constantly subject to change. Some programs are offered on a pilot basis in hopes that they will bring about the results desired.

These programs should be evaluated to determine whether they should be continued. If the cost outweighs the benefits, the program should be discontinued or modified.

The most common reason for evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of a program and ways in which it can be improved. Usually, the decision to continue it has already been made. The question then is, How can it be improved? In looking for the answer to this question, you should consider these eight factors:

1. To what extent does the subject content meet the needs of those attending?
2. Is the leader the one best qualified to teach?
3. Does the leader use the most effective methods for maintaining interest and teaching the desired attitudes, knowledge, and skills?
4. Are the facilities satisfactory?
5. Is the schedule appropriate for the participants?
6. Are the aids effective in improving communication and maintaining interest?
7. Was the coordination of the program satisfactory?
8. What else can be done to improve the program?

A careful analysis of the answers to these questions can identify ways and means of improving future offerings of the program.

When I talked to Matt, a training director of a large bank, and asked him to write a case history on what his organization has done to evaluate its programs, here is what he said: "We haven't really done anything except the 'smile' sheets. We have been thinking a lot about it, and we are anxious to do something. I will be the first one to read your book!"

This is the situation in many companies. They use reaction sheets (or "smile" sheets, as Matt called them) of one kind or another. Most are thinking about doing more. They haven't gone any further for one or more of the following reasons:

- They don't consider it important or urgent.
- They don't know what to do or how to do it.
- There is no pressure from higher management to do more.
- They feel secure in their job and see no need to do more.

- They have too many other things that are more important or that they prefer to do.

In most organizations, both large and small, there is little pressure from top management to prove that the benefits of training outweigh the cost. Many managers at high levels are too busy worrying about profits, return on investment, stock prices, and other matters of concern to the board of directors, stockholders, and customers. They pay little or no attention to training unless they hear bad things about it. As long as trainees are happy and do not complain, trainers feel comfortable, relaxed, and secure.

However, if trainees react negatively to programs, trainers begin to worry, because the word might get to higher-level managers that the program is a waste of time or even worse. And higher-level managers might make decisions based on this information.

In a few organizations, upper-level managers are putting pressure on trainers to justify their existence by proving their worth. Some have even demanded to see tangible results as measured by improvements in sales, productivity, quality, morale, turnover, safety records, and profits. In these situations, training professionals need to have guidelines for evaluating programs at all four levels. And they need to use more than reaction sheets at the end of their programs.

What about trainers who do not feel pressure from above to justify their existence? I suggest that they operate as if there were going to be pressure and be ready for it. Even if the pressure for results never comes, trainers will benefit by becoming accepted, respected, and self-satisfied.

Summary

There are three reasons for evaluating training programs. The most common reason is that evaluation can tell us how to improve future programs. The second reason is to determine whether a program should be continued or dropped. The third reason is to justify the existence of the training department (Corporate University) and its budget. By demonstrating to top management that training has tangible, positive results, trainers will find that their job is more secure, even if and when downsizing occurs. If top-level managers need to cut

back, their impression of the need for a training department will determine whether they say, “That’s one department we need to keep” or “That’s a department that we can eliminate or reduce without hurting us.” And their impression will be greatly influenced by trainers who evaluate at all levels and communicate the results to them.

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by Donald L. Kirkpatrick and James D. Kirkpatrick

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