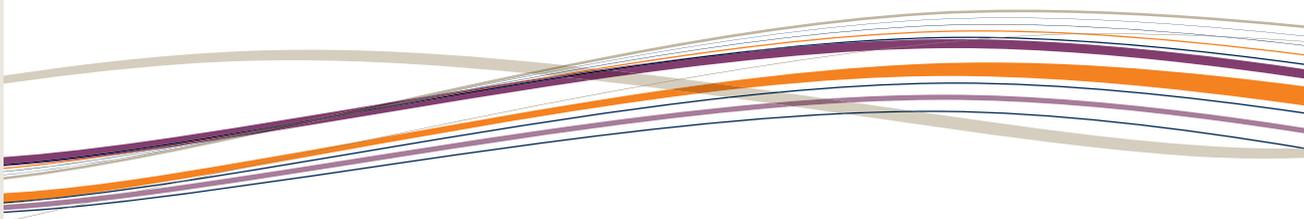


# *Evaluating and demonstrating* the value of training

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Challenges, practices and trends  
at the age of new learning technologies

By Jérôme Wargnier





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1 ROI Institute –  
Survey of CEOs  
of Fortune 500  
companies  
(2009)

# Foreword

Is training a cost or an investment? The question might seem a little brutal, but it is asked more and more often at senior management meetings. The answer depends on us: on our ability to demonstrate how our budgets make a contribution to business performance.

The principle of training evaluation is taken for granted; over 95% of organisations carry out some kind of assessment. Evaluation protocols are systematically used to measure the satisfaction of participants, often used to measure knowledge acquisition, rarely used to measure changes in professional behaviours, and almost never used to measure the impact on business performance. And yet these benchmarks are what our clients want: a survey<sup>1</sup> carried out by the ROI Institute shows that 96% of senior managers are eager to receive data proving the impact of training on business... but only 8% of training departments actually provide such data.

This means our assessment practices must change. But when it comes to ‘climbing’ from one Kirkpatrick & Phillips level to the next, the same questions always seem to come up:

*Can we really assess everything? Do we have to assess everything? For what purpose? Whom for? How do we actually go about it? How do we identify the contribution training makes to performance? Who should be doing the measuring? What resources should we be using? What are the necessary skills?*

This white paper does not claim to offer cut-and-dried answers to all these questions. Its ambition is to clarify the challenges of assessment for each stakeholder, to review the evaluation models available to us, and to see what impact changes in the world of training have had on assessment approaches. Its main aim is to share corporate best practices and to suggest practical ways of demonstrating the true value of our contribution.

Training is one of the few remaining areas where organisations still talk about investment without measuring ROI.

So let's see what we can do to remedy this...

# Evaluation challenges

Training has always had a positive image. No boss's speech or annual report would be complete without mentioning the benefits of "developing human capital".

The implicit idea behind this positive image is that training always delivers some kind of value, and that assessment should simply measure how effective a training package is, without questioning its relevance to corporate strategy, to its target audience, or to the business environment in which it operates.

So why assess training at all? Our unanimous response is "to ensure that training is relevant to corporate challenges, and to demonstrate its performance". As the recession bites, the question takes on an economic slant: assessment has become indispensable for making crucial choices and rationalising investments. And it's also often a way of "selling" decisions to in-house clients.

This means we can see measuring value as a tool for defending our budgets and teams. It can also be seen as a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate the contribution of training to business and to consolidate or build genuine business partnerships.

So we all agree evaluation is vital. Let's now look at the challenges it entails for each individual stakeholder:



# Training departments and corporate universities

Evaluation is a key concern for L&D teams<sup>1</sup>. It's easy to imagine the extra effort and workload involved, but how can we be sure that the results will live up to the investment? It's a question of how much ROI you get from your ROI!

In reality, there's an awful lot at stake for L&D departments in terms of strategy, project control, training efficiency, and positioning.

## ➤ Strategy

Evaluating training means giving ourselves the means to complete the HR process. Without properly documented analysis, training creates a grey area. With structured data, it becomes possible to integrate all your processes, from performance management to skills development.

Evaluation also determines the relevance of any human capital development strategy. Estimating the impact of such initiatives allows you to define training plan priorities and intelligently allocate resources.

As you prioritise, you must keep overall balance in mind, especially the balance between short and long term perspectives. Managers all too often encourage their training teams to give in to a sense of urgency, whereas a significant part of our resources should be given over to preserving standards and ensuring forward-looking skills management.

Last but not least, evaluation plays a central role in the way we manage our solutions portfolio. It clearly determines our choices in terms of maintaining and improving our training packages.

### **Creating a corporate university for a major high street bank**

Senior management were determined to speed up internationalisation and put the university team in charge of designing a training portfolio that would help harmonise work practices. The team reviewed the situation in different countries and saw that there was a lot of duplication: for example there were 17 different training paths for young managers. When we spoke to the director of the university two years later, he said that the evaluation platform had made it possible to rationalise the training portfolio, and that the development of common criteria had neutralised most of the irrational reactions the project had originally provoked.

## ✧ Budget

Demonstrating our contribution to business performance isn't just the best way of keeping our budgets, it's the only way! In a world where **More with Less** has become a watchword, if you can't show where there's More, you'll find yourself trying to do with Less.

Later on, we'll see how to carry out a training portfolio review in order to optimise cost-effectiveness.

Training budgets have, at best, remained stagnant over the last decade. There are a variety of reasons for this, as Phillips & Gaudet point out: *“Organisations that don't carry out detailed evaluations tend to reduce or cancel their training budgets, whereas organisations that do evaluate tend to increase them.”*

Training will always be an adjustment variable until it shows a return on investment.

## ✧ Instructional design

Evaluation is not an optional extra on top of instructional design; it's one of its essential components. In fact, evaluation should always be the first step in a training initiative. That's exactly what Donald Kirkpatrick recommends in his evaluation model. Giving yourself a benchmark when you start means you can then measure progress.

Besides the impact on business, measuring satisfaction, learning and knowledge transfer gives you valuable data to help you define your targets and to make the best choices in terms of training modality and course structure.

There are also some innovative approaches that organisations expect their training teams to deploy: multimodal learning, social learning, communities, and so on. Evaluation is vital when you introduce these approaches, because it enables you to precisely monitor the responses of your target users and the effectiveness of the chosen methods.

Ultimately, something you measure will always have more chance of being implemented. By measuring indicators at each stage of the learning process, training managers can make adjustments and follow the process through.

They can also monitor the involvement of the various stakeholders – not only the learner, but also his or her line manager, the HR people, and the sponsors.

## ✧ Project management

You don't fly a plane with a black box! The main benefits of evaluation come out during the project scoping process; it's not just a question of responding to orders from sponsors. Evaluation means you can concentrate on business challenges rather than on deciding what type of training to use. It means you focus on building solutions **for**, and more importantly **with**, your clients. It forces you to be very precise about your goals, and it enables you to set up a formal, binding contract with your stakeholders.

A clear picture of your target makes it possible to draw up a business plan when you're dealing with strategic or complex initiatives, or training plans that involve large numbers of people.

The second benefit can be seen in "glocalised" (global/local) strategies. This applies in particular to centralised training teams whose internal clients are not their bosses. This means they have to work with local L&D teams who often have a different set of challenges to face. A structured evaluation protocol is a major asset here because it enables you to help the local team formulate its objectives and facilitates interactions with the people in charge. In the longer term it fosters a more professional, more uniform approach within organisations.

An approach that focuses on value creation makes it easier to manage partnerships effectively. Evaluation gives you essential data to help you assess service providers, deal with quality issues, and make reasoned choices. Human relationships are always an important factor here, although they must never be thought of as the main driving force behind the choices you make.

## ✧ Positioning

As Don Taylor, CEO of Learning Skills Group, says: *"training should not be defined by its actions or its deliverables... but by what it makes possible."*

The attitudes of senior managers will only change when they see L&D teams as fully-fledged business partners. Aligning training with the challenges the organisation faces, focusing on value creation, and interpreting impact can only help to boost its credibility.

Moreover, sponsors and managers are much more eager to get involved when they can see the future benefits of a training initiative. To get them on board, we must not underestimate how important it is to use marketing techniques to "sell" the idea of evaluation. L&D teams all too often forget to showcase their successes and to celebrate them with their clients.

2 CLIP:  
Corporate  
Learning  
Improvement  
Process,  
an auditing and  
consultancy  
procedure  
run by the  
European  
Foundation for  
Management  
Development  
(EFMD)

Last but not least, evaluation is necessary in order to synch with corporate quality criteria. Senior managers with whom L&D teams are not used to working will appreciate efforts made to achieve consistency. And when an L&D department obtains an external quality endorsement (such as “CLIP” awarded by the EFMD<sup>2</sup>), this gives the L&D team an aura that often radiates beyond the frontiers of the company itself.

## Trainers

True professionals have nothing to fear from evaluation. Inadequate evaluation results in extremely uneven levels of professionalism among trainers, and allows underperformers to creep into the system. Evaluation is like a turnstile at the entrance to a market. It helps you make comparisons, and make much better decisions. It gives well-earned credit to proficient trainers, and weeds out the amateurs who drag the profession down. Exacting standards are of benefit to the whole profession.

## Sponsors and senior managers

The challenges involved in training are so great and the budgets so large that it would be crazy not to evaluate results. We've seen that demand for measuring impact exists, and that it is expressed regularly and patiently by a majority of company managers. The real question is: how long will this last? We've all heard colleagues talking about workplace auditors appointed by senior management turning up out of the blue. The question of ROI, though often neglected during training initiatives, is a central concern for such auditors. But when they arrive at your door it's too late to start talking about the “quality-driven” aspects of training and its “social dimension”. In such situations, prevention is always better than cure.

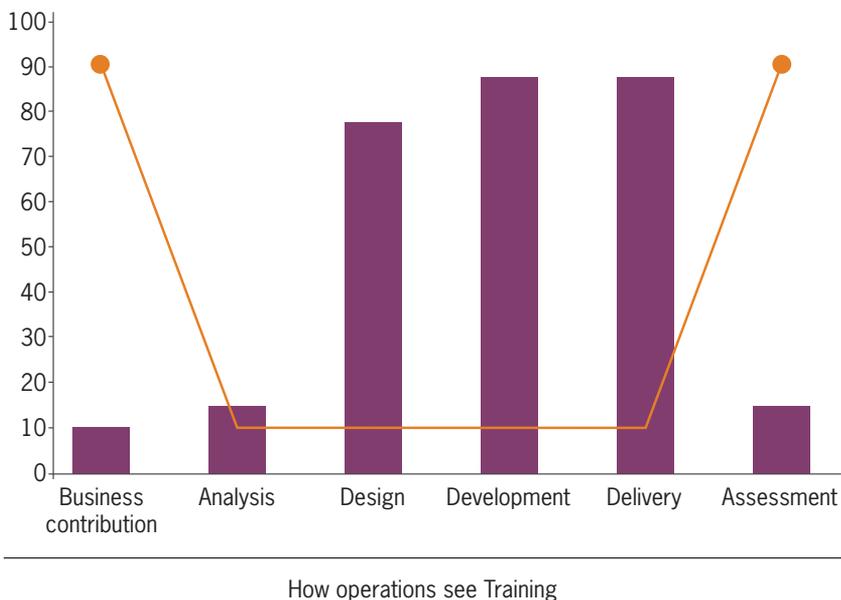
Even if they don't insist on systematic measurement of ROI, senior managers expect L&D teams to show that they understand the strategic issues involved, that they are results-oriented, and that they're eager to make a practical contribution to corporate performance.

Managers feel that a structured approach to training evaluation is likely to bring the following benefits (in descending order of importance):

- Providing an accurate description of the company's skills base (useful for determining the most realistic strategy, identifying skills that need to be passed down, etc.)

- Fostering employee/employer dialogue (increasing employability, reducing stress in the workplace, etc.)
- Facilitating budget allocation decisions
- Enhancing the employer's brand image, making it easier to attract and retain talent
- Measuring contributions made by training initiatives on an on-going basis (unlike the "black box" approach)
- Making the priorities of L&D departments clearer

It's interesting to see how the resources allocated by L&D teams differ from the expectations of the managers they set out to serve.



- Operations' expectations
- Allocation of resources by the L&D teams

Source: Larry Israelite (2006)

## Line managers

The managers of target groups are not always the ones who commission the training initiative. Although their requirements almost always tally with those of the project sponsors, they have other more specific needs that also need to be taken into account.

Line managers are responsible for the largest part of the performance management process, especially via annual performance reviews. They consider that a structured evaluation procedure brings the following benefits:

- It gives them a more precise overview of the skills of their team members
- It enables them to make more appropriate recommendations in terms of training
- It helps them identify levers of change and provide better support for teams
- It helps them choose the right time to train people in order to maximise impact

L&D teams often complain that managers are insufficiently involved in training initiatives. Giving them indicators that shed light on their management approach and that highlight their role as skills developers can only reinforce their involvement. They want L&D teams to be their “business partners”, so let’s help them become our “training partners”.

The CrossKnowledge white paper on the 70:20:10 model<sup>3</sup> describes a number of ways of increasing the involvement of managers in the training process.

## Learners

Now let’s talk about the main targets of training: the learners themselves. To talk about the challenges they face, we need to distinguish them from our in-house clients, in other words senior managers and line managers.

All too often, learners are seen as the lucky recipients of training. They are expected to play an active role in their own development. But we tend to underestimate the level of commitment they have to provide: absence from their workstation, extra work, efforts made to change their work practices... And the worst thing is that we almost deny them the opportunity to measure the benefits of what they’ve learned.

Evaluation is a key plank of the training process. To optimise their development initiatives, learners need to know the level they start off with, the level they’re aiming at, and the progress they make during training. Anticipating the positive outcome of training is a powerful way of making it meaningful and motivating.

Here’s what learners say they want evaluation to tell them:

- Their initial level, in addition to their line manager’s own assessment
- The standard level defined by the company for each skill and each role
- Progress made and level achieved by the end of the course

- Acknowledgement of progress made, especially when discussing career prospects

They also consider that a formal evaluation in the form of an **accreditation** would be an extra incentive. They see this kind of endorsement as a reassurance, as a boost to employability, as a way of reducing work-related stress, and as an incentive.

In his book entitled Drive<sup>4</sup>, Daniel Pink describes the motivational levers that replace the carrot and stick approach typical of the Taylorian model: these are **autonomy**, **mastery** and **purpose**. New evaluation protocols that link training to practical needs more readily embody a sense of purpose. Evaluation naturally makes it possible to gauge mastery of a particular skill.

So-called “knowledge workers” are eager to develop their skills. To ensure effective management of this major asset, they need a “meter” that measures their skills acquisition.

#### **A warning from the director of a Corporate University**

Offering a manager training to improve the way he manages stress is an initiative that holds many promises. For the manager, it promises a happier environment in both professional and personal terms, as well as improved efficiency. For his teams, it promises less stressful communication, which is likely to enhance productivity. In the end, we hope that it will lead to an improvement in both individual and team performance. This is what we hope...but we rarely measure how effective the training is.

The vast majority of training professionals choose their career path with the noble intention of improving the work experience for others. But it's highly likely that company bosses will not allow us to be noble for much longer if we are unable to demonstrate that we are creating value for the organisation.

***Everyone agrees that training can't do any harm. We're now expected to prove that it can be of real benefit.***

4 D. Pink –  
*Drive, The  
Surprising Truth  
About What  
Motivates Us*  
Riverside, 2009

# State of the art

We can hardly talk about evaluation without referring to Donald Kirkpatrick and Jack Phillips, who came up with the most influential and widely used training evaluation model. Their work was published between 1959 and 1983. Since then, a number of revolutions have taken place in the corporate world in general and the field of training in particular, which means we need to look at what more recent alternative models have contributed, and to review current thinking on the subject.

In this section, we will be exploring:

- Kirkpatrick's four levels
- Phillips' fifth level
- New factors that need to be taken into account
- Subjects currently open to debate

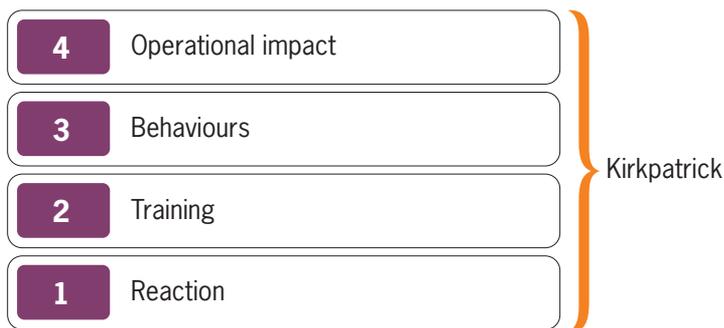
## The Kirkpatrick model

Donald Kirkpatrick's first observations were published in 1959 in the ASTD Journal<sup>1</sup>. They became an authoritative reference following the publication of his book *"Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels"*.

### ✦ The four levels

The model is comprised of four levels of evaluation:

- 1. Reaction:** the way learners perceive training (usefulness, enjoyment, etc.)
- 2. Learning:** the development of knowledge and practical skills
- 3. Behaviour:** using acquired skills in work situations
- 4. Results:** the impact of training on the performance of the organisation



<sup>1</sup> ASTD: American Society of Training Directors. The same acronym is used for the American Society for Training & Development, of which D. Kirkpatrick was appointed director in 1975.

### ✧ Two major principles

- The first principle is that of **ascending value**. In the Kirkpatrick model, the value of data increases as we move from one level to the next. It is, however, not possible to move directly to the upper levels. Moreover, both complexity and the time required to obtain data also increase as we move upwards.
- The second principle is that of **causality and positive correlation**: a high score at one level has a positive effect on the next level.

### ✧ A recent update

It is important to remind ourselves of the context in which these publications appeared. At the time, training exclusively took place in classrooms or in the workplace. A trainer passed on his knowledge to learners. As time went on, it became impossible to apply the four levels in their initial form, and on the fiftieth anniversary of the model, Jim Kirkpatrick and Wendy Kayser Kirkpatrick published an update<sup>2</sup> showing how the model remains valid as long as its principles are adhered to.

### ✧ A partial validation of the model

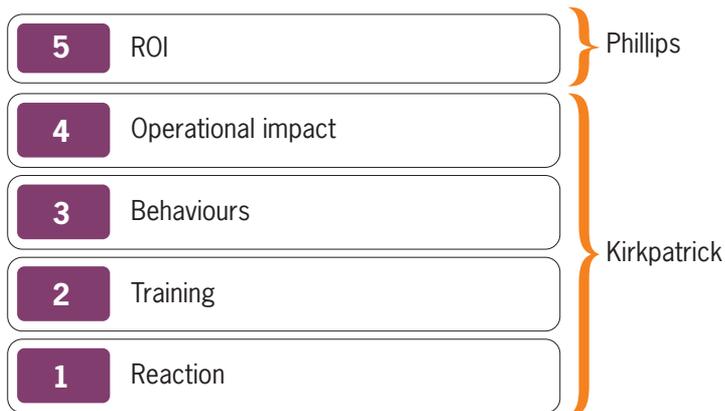
All ground-breaking models are subject to criticism. Studies by Alliger and Janak (1989) call into question the hierarchical and causative nature of the Kirkpatrick model. They tend to favour the principle of socio-cognitive conflict, which sees an unpleasant experience as a sign of learning (stepping out of one's comfort zone, experiencing difficulties when carrying out experiments, etc.). This would tend to refute the hypothesis that learner satisfaction (level 1) is a sign of commitment that is essential for the continuation of the development process. Other studies, however, for example those published by Bouteiller and Cossette (2007) and Le Louarn and Pottiez (2010), thoroughly validate the positive causative relationship between the levels of the model.

The conclusion of these studies is thus a partial, conditional validation of the model. The main limitation of the Kirkpatrick model remains the fact that it does not describe indicators precisely enough, and that it fails to explain how to use them in practice.

## Phillips' fifth level: training ROI

Jack J. Phillips formulated his ROI methodology in the thesis he wrote in 1973. He wanted to complete the Kirkpatrick model by replying to the legitimate question: *"Has training brought me more than what I paid for it?"*

He produced a structured methodology and standards, and his approach now forms the basis of a certification process<sup>3</sup>.



What Phillips proposed with his "fifth level" was to convert the level 4 data into a financial value, which we then compare to the investment made by the company. The ROI formula is then very simple: it's the ratio of what training costs to what you gain from it. Training professionals tend to dislike this system because it tries to boil everything down to an economic equation; it is, however, very popular with company directors.

The set formula for calculating return on investment comes straight from the world of finance. Here it is:

$$\text{ROI} = [(\text{Benefits} - \text{Cost}) / \text{Cost}] \times 100$$

<sup>3</sup> For a complete bibliography and information on certification, go to [www.roiinstitute.net](http://www.roiinstitute.net)

## Other evaluation models

### ✦ Hamblin model (1974)

The Hamblin model is an adaptation of the Kirkpatrick model. Its main contribution lies in the distinction it makes between observable impacts among the target population and ultimate value creation. This means that a training initiative can improve the performance of a group even if it has a negative ROI or a negative impact on the organisation.

This model thus encourages a holistic evaluation of training.

### ✦ CIPP model – Stufflebeam (1971)

This model relies on a systemic approach made up of the following components:

- **C**: analysis of **Context** by describing the target and clarifying needs
- **I**: analysis of **Input**, especially possible strategies and available resources
- **P**: analysis of **Processes** to determine how deployment was carried out
- **P**: analysis of **Products** to assess quality of deliverables and outcomes

The main advantage of CIPP is that it analyses both training processes and deliverables. It also encourages us to explore all the possible ways of addressing issues relating to the target, which include training but are not limited to it.

### ✦ CIRO model – Bird, Warr & Rackham (1970)

The CIRO model also includes four levels: **Context** and **Input**, which are almost identical to the first two levels of CIPP, then **Reaction** and **Outcome** which are similar to levels 1 and 4 of the Kirkpatrick model. This model is interesting in that it tries to establish a view of the context, resources and effects of training.

We will see how the model proposed below uses these different elements.

### ✦ Goal-oriented approach – Tyler

Tyler starts from the observation that most training is based on more or less well-defined goals. The seven steps of his approach are especially useful for precisely defining objectives with clients and optimising measurement of level 3 of the Kirkpatrick model.

### ✧ Guba & Lincoln model

This model is based on collaboration and constructive negotiation. It recommends bringing together all the stakeholders so that they can agree on their perception of the initial situation, the issues to be addressed, the target situation, and the means available to achieve the goal. Once the training has taken place, another similar meeting is held to assess how effective it has been. The main advantage of this method is to reinforce cooperation and commitment on the part of the people involved.

### ✧ Success Case Method – Brinkerhoff (1995)

This is an integrated approach that sets out to assess not only training outcomes, but also the processes that lead to them. It is based on observing outstanding achievements so as to validate high-potential areas for development and to identify the most effective approaches.

This kind of analysis forms a natural component of the “toolbox” described below.

### ✧ The KPMT of added value – Kearns & Miller (1997)

This approach is attractive in that it is highly pragmatic. Paul Kearns gives short shrift to philosophical arguments, which he sees as excuses for not producing the kind of evaluations our clients want.

He says that all training has to demonstrate its impact on behaviour and business and/or its ROI, which means he focuses his approach on levels 3 to 5. To further simplify the process, he defines three types of training and related evaluations:

- Mandatory training (on safety, products, integration, etc.) where it's necessary to show that a target level has been achieved;
- Value-added training that responds to a clear operational requirement, where it's necessary to measure the value it generates in operational or financial terms;
- “Luxury” training, i.e. training that does not belong in either of the other categories. He strongly questions its value.

The model set out below maintains this distinction.

### ✧ Bersin & Associates

Every year Bersin & Associates publishes authoritative studies and a review of best practices in skills development. This has gradually led to the production of a complete set<sup>4</sup> of evaluation standards, which even includes assessment of informal training. Notions of “adoption” and “activity” in collaborative environments are described and presented as practical tools. The 2012 version of *Building a High Impact Learning Organization*<sup>®</sup> offers a model that describes the four stages of maturity of an organisation in terms of evaluation:

- Reinforcement of use and effectiveness
- Learning enterprise strategy
- L&D approach integrated into business strategy
- Integrated talent management

It is particularly interesting that “progress” is seen as the result of a dual alignment with business performance and HR talent management processes.

Without trying to be exhaustive, we might mention some other models worthy of interest:

- Buschnell’s IPO model (1990)
- The OEM model proposed by Kaufman, Keller and Watkins (1995)
- The business impact model proposed by Molenda, Pershing and Reigeluth (1996)
- The model based on decision-making proposed by Kraiger (2002)

We should also include usefulness analysis models and monetary estimation of standard deviation of job performance.

### ✧ So...

There are a considerable number of models for evaluating training. The main distinction between them hinges on whether they are results-oriented or process-oriented. What emerges from this academic inventory is that each makes a real contribution to our understanding, and although this means there are a wide variety of approaches, it can also lead to confusion among training professionals. In the end, the two reference models turn out to be quite robust even if there is no detailed protocol for the four levels described by Kirkpatrick. The “toolbox” presented in the next section is thus based on these models, but also includes contributions from the others.

## And what about ROE?

What should we think about ROE, or Return on Expectations? For some, it's a new way of building *business partnerships with sponsors*. For others, it's a vague notion that doubles up with levels 3 and 4 in the Kirkpatrick models. Its most virulent critics see it as a new piece of training jargon designed to avoid measuring the dreaded ROI.

ROE is an alternative to ROI proposed by James Kirkpatrick and Wendy Kirkpatrick<sup>5</sup>. It is defined as the ability of training to respond effectively to a business challenge expressed by a sponsor.

*5 Why Return on Expectations is getting so much attention, 2010*

### ➤ Using ROE

The main aim of the approach is to precisely define goals (i.e. expectations) in terms of observable behavioural changes and/or impact on business, and to have these goals validated by all the stakeholders. The key steps in the implementation of ROE thus naturally take place before the training begins.

- 1. Negotiation:** The aim of this first step is to assess the quality of the request in terms of how relevant and realistic it is given the available resources. It requires a systemic overview in order to identify all the potential responses to the need expressed, and to estimate the relative impact of the training. It makes it possible to decide whether the training is an effective way of addressing the problem.
- 2. Defining metrics:** The second step enables you to define all the indicators that will be affected by the training initiative. You then select the most significant ones, for which you set precise objectives. Then all you have to do is define the protocol and identify the people who will be carrying out the measurements.
- 3. Identifying critical behaviour:** The third step involves making a list of the work practices that affect these indicators in the target group. Again, you have to select examples of behaviour that are likely to have the most leverage.
- 4. Defining training goals:** In the fourth step, the person running the initiative describes the changes to critical behaviour that the training will bring about. He or she formulates the goals of the initiative and includes these in the guidelines for the course designers.

Many trainers feel that ROE is more appropriate than ROI for the following reasons:

- It involves close collaboration between the sponsor and the training team in defining and selecting indicators and evaluation protocols.
- The indicators it describes are closer to the reality of the sponsors than a mere financial ratio.
- It is fundamentally constructive, unlike ROI which, as it focuses on training performance, can be considered as defensive.
- It is much simpler and cheaper to measure.

#### ❖ **Serious limitations**

Described in this way, ROE might seem to be the catch-all solution for evaluation. And yet its critics are not short of good counter-arguments.

- First of all, one would be forgiven for wondering how this approach differs from levels 3 (behaviour) and 4 (business impact) in the Kirkpatrick model. If ROE is only useful for grouping together a set of indicators, then its only value is semantic; it enriches the vocabulary of training at the risk of generating confusion among our sponsors.
- If the aim of ROE is to have sponsors express their perception of what's expected in terms of training goals, this means we're actually looking at a level 1 evaluation (satisfaction). Critics say that we cannot consider ROE to be a serious approach in that it moves to and fro between objective definitions and subjective perceptions.
- Another criticism levelled at ROE is that the term is already used by financial directors to describe a different indicator, *Return on Equity*. They may well find this annoying, and ask us to use indicators whose meaning is unambiguous; ROI will then trump ROE.
- Last but not least, Jack Phillips considers that the definition of ROE doesn't tell us whether it's a concept, an indicator or an objective.

To conclude on a positive note, ROE does lead to thorough, collaborative scoping of training initiatives. We can consider that this significant benefit is enough, whilst keeping hold of Kirkpatrick levels 3 and 4, which are broader, more widely used and accepted indicators.

# Measuring the indirect effects of training

## ✦ Value and controversy

Corporate image, employer branding, social climate, customer attraction, attrition and retention, levels of team engagement, well-being at work, team-building and absenteeism are all parameters that can be indirectly but no less significantly influenced by training.

And yet the way these impacts are measured is endlessly controversial. Phillips says *"If it exists, we must be able to measure it!"* and builds intangibles into his model. J. Kirkpatrick disagrees with this obsession with systematic evaluation, while Paul Kearns considers that if such impacts are important enough, they must be included in primary objectives.

## ✦ How do we decide what must be selected and measured?

Evaluation protocols used in companies often cover the indirect benefits of training, playing an important role in social climate monitoring and engagement surveys. The following questions are almost always asked:

- Is there an effective process to help you identify your development priorities?
- Does your company help its staff learn and develop?
- Do you have enough opportunities to put new skills into practice?

Furthermore, we mustn't forget to include analysis of the informal dimension of training: quality of feedback and support from the line manager, collaborative approaches, and so on. Companies specialising in evaluating engagement know how to correlate perceived training quality with indicators like stress, absenteeism, staff turnover, and even changes in the value of the initiative.

To conclude, it seems appropriate to carry out a two-tier analysis:

- A small number of strategic indicators clearly correlated with the needs of a department (attrition, collaboration, etc.). These will be found in the training dashboard.
- Less frequent observations used to identify impacts on other parameters that might influence training.

### ✦ Making the right choices

The Kirkpatrick model isn't used systematically enough for us to waste time trying to measure indicators other than the ones our sponsors expect. To be properly focused, you have to make choices... and choosing one thing means relinquishing others.

#### **A salesman takes the train**

A sales rep has to meet an important prospective client whose office is several hundred miles away. He decides to go by train instead of driving. This decision enables him to reduce his carbon footprint and to work during the trip; it also means he gets less tired and has a safer journey.

When he gets back, he can congratulate himself on these secondary benefits... but only as long as he brings back a contract! His boss is highly unlikely to be satisfied with the incidental effects.

We should be happy to see our work making a contribution to team cohesion, motivation and staff well-being. But let's stay focused on the value creation our sponsors expect. It's pointless to make dashboards just to count the cherries on the cake.

**What's  
changing...  
and what  
has to  
change**

Even if the Kirkpatrick and Phillips models have been regularly updated and other approaches added, they are part of a world where training was mainly provided in classrooms or in the staff member's office. It is thus vital to take account of the changes that have taken place in the corporate world in general, and in training in particular, to be able to make the best choices in terms of evaluation strategy.

Here are five major changes that have an impact on evaluation methods:

- Economic context
- Stakeholder expectations
- New training approaches
- Wide use of new technology
- Increased professionalism of trainers

## Economic context

The economic crises of the last twenty years have obviously had a significant impact on approaches to performance evaluation. They have led to widespread use of ROI in all areas of corporate life. Training is no exception, even if, as we have seen, our ability to respond to the demands of senior management remains inadequate.

The first consequence has been, at best, that training budgets have remained stagnant for the past ten years or so. *More with Less* has become the new rule of the game.

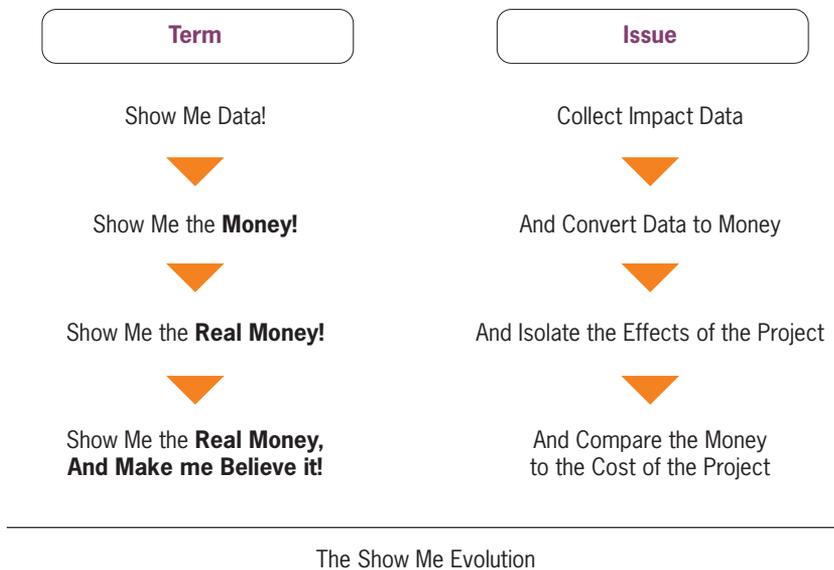
**“More”** means reinforcing the contribution made by training both in quantitative terms (more people trained, more often, on more subjects) and in qualitative terms (agility, innovation, optimised skills transfer).

**“Less”** means making the right choices in terms of priorities (subjects, target groups, formats, etc.) and modalities (multimodal learning, externalisation/internalisation, etc.) to optimise the way training budgets are allocated.

To help us resolve this delicate equation, evaluation protocols have become an essential tool.

## Stakeholder expectations

An analysis of what's at stake for the different stakeholders mentioned above undoubtedly shows that people expect more and more from evaluation. A study by Jack and Patti Phillips focuses on the expectations of senior management. The table reproduced below has an evocative title (*The Show-Me Evolution* – T&D Magazine, August 2011). For many years managers gave training a blank cheque and considered that employee satisfaction was enough. We can now see that they want results expressed in terms of hard figures. The financialisation of the economy, followed by the recession, are responsible for this.



Bosses now more often ask for ROI forecasts for projects they have to choose between, and training projects are no exception. Evaluation is now expected to be an early decision-making criterion (contributing to modelling and forecasts) rather than a justification after the fact.

## New training approaches

We live in a world saturated with information. A study by Robert Kelley shows that the proportion of memorised information we need to carry out our work was 75% in 1986 and 8% in 2006, with the emergence of computing and then the Internet. This means it is more efficient to search for information than to commit it to memory. This new skill, which Charles Jennings terms MindFind, reflects a completely new relationship to information that challenges the relevance of level 2 of the Kirkpatrick model, i.e. the acquisition and retention of knowledge.

Moreover, with the increasingly widespread use of the 70:20:10 model, we have stopped looking at training as an “event” and started seeing it as a “process”. We now know that it is pointless to measure the benefits of a training course as soon as people leave the classroom. Also, the training arsenal now includes new approaches (experiential training, co-development, communities of practice, etc.). It is now impossible to carry out proper evaluation without taking into account the 90% of learning that takes place through workplace interactions.

## New technology

As in commerce, where distribution channels are going digital, Internet has completely changed the training landscape. We’re not saying that it’s all over for classroom training – far from it. But we need to focus our training approaches on value creation and free ourselves from the constraints of logistics. This is how new technologies have allowed new types of training to emerge, such as e-learning, learning communities, multimodal learning, and serious games. Clearly the old evaluation models are no longer enough, and we urgently need to add new indicators to our dashboards.

We should also note that these types of training have often been marketed using the promise of a higher ROI than classroom training: training more people on more subjects, more flexibly, for the same price or even more cheaply. It’s hardly surprising that sponsors ask for proof of these benefits, and it’s up to us to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of new learning technologies. It’s not hard to do, even if we just show the direct effect they have on logistical costs.

At the same time, new technologies offer unprecedented computing power and allow us to automate the evaluation process – from data collection to data processing– and to significantly expand our criteria.

## Increased professionalism of trainers

The training profession was open to all comers for far too long. Fortunately, more and more courses, certificates and quality labels have now remedied this. The level of professionalism of both in-house training teams and external service providers increases every year. These efforts require clear endorsement that only thorough evaluation protocols can provide.

***Considering what's at stake and the major changes described above, it has become a priority to change our approach to evaluation procedures.***

**Who  
measures  
what?**

A study<sup>1</sup> carried out in 2010 by McKinsey confirms our initial hypotheses. 90% of companies state that skills development is one of their top ten strategic priorities. And yet they estimate that only 25% of their training has an impact on performance. And only 8% of them thoroughly measure training ROI.

1 *Putting a value on training* – McKinsey, July 2010

## General overview

### ✦ Poor use of evaluation

Below you will find the average results from the studies we have examined. Evaluation carried out at each level of the Kirkpatrick & Phillips model is as follows:

■ Level 1	90%
■ Level 2	50%
■ Level 3	20%
■ Level 4	10%
■ Level 5	2%

The low results have to be put into perspective as not all training initiatives call for the measurement of all the Kirkpatrick levels. Jack Phillips himself recommends not evaluating everything systematically and suggests adapting one's approach to the needs of each initiative. He says it is appropriate to measure at the following rates:

■ Level 1	100%
■ Level 2	70%
■ Level 3	50%
■ Level 4	10%

### ✦ A significant change

What also comes out of these studies is that significant progress has been made in terms of evaluation over the last ten years.

There seem to be three reasons for this:

- Trainers becoming more professional
- Increased demand from sponsors
- More widespread use of computerised tools

But the fact remains that the greatest challenge faced by training is to quickly and significantly improve its ability to measure impact, as shown by the results of a survey<sup>3</sup> presented in 2012 by Bersin & Associates. Their findings also show that only 13% of companies have robust evaluation protocols. Josh Bersin attributes this critical shortfall to the absence of business plans for training initiatives - and for training departments in general.

### ❖ A need for structure

In the first instance, we should be happy to see that approaches have become more uniform thanks to the adoption of the Kirkpatrick & Phillips models, which have become important reference tools for a majority of trainers.

Nevertheless, evaluation still suffers from a significant lack of methodological rigour:

- It is not considered to be a process that gives structure to course development, and this means that teams perceive it as an added burden; this partly explains their reluctance.
- The scoping phase is not carried out in a sufficiently professional manner.
- People often do “reverse engineering”, i.e. evaluating and rationalising objectives after the fact.
- Evaluation is too often limited to end-of-course assessments, which are completely irrelevant to new learning formats (multimodal learning, informal learning, etc.)
- Results are not used in a structured way and in the long-term perspective.
- In 98% of cases, evaluation is used *ad hoc* to confirm the quality of a trainer or to fine-tune a training course.
- Sponsors and managers are still inadequately involved in the design of protocols and the implementation of evaluation procedures.

## Level by level analysis

In addition to the above general analysis, we have analysed each level of the Kirkpatrick & Phillips models, using the following approach:

- How often? How often is evaluation used at this level?
- Why? What are the goals of this evaluation for the training team?
- When? When is the evaluation carried out?
- How? What are the criteria and protocols used?
- Who? Who is involved in the evaluation?

Each section is followed by a set of recommendations.

### ➤ Level 1: Reaction

**How often?** Companies evaluate this level about 90% of the time.

**Why?** This type of evaluation is used to validate training methods, to confirm the quality of a trainer, and to fine-tune training initiatives.

**When?** This evaluation is carried out 80% of the time at the end of the training course (which is meaningless for multimodal formats) and 20% of the time over subsequent weeks... with extremely poor response rates.

**How?** The items analysed are very varied: from quality of teaching to quality of accommodation, ignoring essential items such as learning pace, quality of interactions, or quality of responses to questions posed by learners. Sometimes level 1 questions try to describe the next levels of the model, which creates confusion rather than providing useful information (e.g. *“Do you think this training will have an impact on the way you do your work?”*). At this level, evaluation is generally carried out in a haphazard way, usually via a paper questionnaire whose results are fed into an Excel table. There is very little comparative measurement, no benchmarks, and no long-term analysis. To make the data easier to use, criteria are usually expressed on a value scale (1/“weak” to 5/“strong”).

**Who?** It’s always the learner who is consulted, rarely the trainer, even more rarely the sponsors or managers.

#### **Recommendations**

There is a lot of work to be done at this level before going on to the next levels:

- Standardise evaluation media
- Use data systematically, especially via on-line tools
- Use more coherent testing methods
- Spread evaluation over time to make it relevant to multimodal approaches
- Involve all stakeholders
- Communicate results

## ✧ Level 2: Learning

**How often?** Companies evaluate his level about 50% of the time.

**Why?** There are two types of objective. “Formative” assessment is used to observe knowledge acquisition and to adapt training paths. “Summative” assessment makes it possible to endorse acquired knowledge and support learners experiencing difficulties.

**When?** Evaluation is carried out immediately after training 80% of the time, which takes no account of the rapid erosion of memorised information after a training session (80% lost within three weeks).

**How?** Items of knowledge that form part of the training course are evaluated. Questionnaires and quizzes, many of them on line, have become common over recent years. In addition, there are tests and questions directly administered by the learner, not always under the supervision of his or her tutor or line manager.

**Who?** The learner usually carries out the evaluation. Managers or tutors are involved in fewer than 20% of cases.

### **Recommendations**

- Systematically carry out pre-course evaluation in order to build a knowledge inventory (HR), set progress goals (L&D), and get the learner working towards personalised objectives
- Make personalised training recommendations via formative assessments
- Work on evaluation methods that measure people’s ability to find and use information rather than just memorise it (cf. the MindFind theory put forward by Charles Jennings)
- Carry out evaluations some time after the course to measure knowledge retention
- Link evaluation of learning with evaluation of knowledge transfer
- Implement a certification process across all training

### ➤ Level 3: Behaviour

**How often?** Companies evaluate this level about 20% of the time.

**Why?** To check that skills are being applied in the workplace and assess changes in behaviour. Transfer is the critical phase in the learning process.

**When?** Evaluation is most often carried out a few weeks after the course. This approach shows that training is still perceived as an event rather than a process.

**How?** Measurements are usually based on self-assessment by the learner (e.g. *“How often do you use the skills developed during the course? never, sometimes, often, always”*). In addition to this highly questionable declarative approach there are interactions with the line manager, which include informal debriefing sessions, annual performance reviews, and more or less formal observations made at work. More infrequently, an expert or the trainer himself comes to watch the learner to ensure the skill is being applied properly.

**Who?** Behaviour evaluations always involve the learner, and sometimes (15% of the time) his or her line manager or tutor.

#### Reproducing best practices

In the mid 2000s a top photocopier manufacturer decided to change its value proposition; instead of just selling machines, it would now sell integrated document management solutions. This was a revolution for the sales force, as it involved new products, a new approach, new organisational methods, new people to talk to, and new skills.

The corresponding training initiative was rolled out simultaneously in twenty countries. What is remarkable is the way the sales managers were involved in changing the approach of the sales force. They not only took the course (to be consistent and set a good example), they were also specially trained to observe what was happening in the field. A special grid with about twenty criteria was used every time a manager was present at a meeting with a prospect. This meant that feedback was always perfectly in line with overall business goals and with the way the training was supposed to be used. More generally, aggregating the completed grids made it possible to carry out highly targeted support initiatives and build the training plan for the following year. Even more importantly, the company beat its sales targets by 12%, although these goals had initially been perceived as very ambitious.

## Recommendations

- Involve managers in designing skills transfer evaluation protocols (observation grids, meeting guidelines, etc.)
- Systematically use Personal Development Plans (personal goals, possible ways of achieving them, success indicators, etc.)
- Draw up a list of implementation tasks and give it to managers along with the relevant assessment indicators
- Train managers to carry out debriefing sessions and evaluations linked to the Performance Management process used in the company (e.g. annual performance reviews)
- Make widespread use of accreditation

### ✧ Level 4: Business impact

**How often?** Companies evaluate this level about 9% of the time.

**Why?** To demonstrate the contribution training makes to individual and collective performance.

**When?** When it is used, this type of evaluation is carried out a few weeks or months after the training initiative. The schedule is determined according to the subject, and timed for maximum effect.

**How?** A wide variety of indicators are used. This can be explained not only by the varying impact of different training initiatives, but often also by a lack of cooperation and preparatory work with managers. The training most often evaluated at level 4 is that given to sales teams. The reason for this is that performance indicators are presumed to be self-evident.

**Who?** Managers don't feel concerned by the evaluation process, which they feel is the responsibility of the training teams. However, trying to evaluate impact on business without them is meaningless. On average, manager and learner are involved in less than one in three cases.

## Recommendations

- Select operational indicators for sponsors and managers at the scoping (preparatory) stage
- Express benefits of training in terms of positive impact on business
- Formally plan evaluation with managers and involve a senior manager in dashboard monitoring

- Use control groups to measure impact. If these panels are representative, you can make credible extrapolations and apply the results to the entire cohort

### How can I help you?

We measured performance of counter sales staff working for a large cosmetics chain:

- Average number of customers per day = 40€
- Average spent by each customer = 15€€

After a period of sales training, we monitored performance of a representative group of salespeople. The results are as follows:

- Average number of customers per day = 46€
- Average spent by each customer = 17€€

Productivity increased by 30%; each salesperson generated a turnover of 782€ instead of 600€ before the training, an increase of 182€ per day. Although we have to isolate the impact of the training and adjust these values to avoid unpleasant surprises, this is a fantastic result.

### ➤ Level 5: Return on investment

**How often?** Companies evaluate this level about 2% of the time.

**Why?** From a theoretical point of view, it enables you to optimise allocation of resources according to value creation forecasts for training initiatives.

**When?** ROI assessment can only be carried out after a process has ended because it has to factor in all the costs of the training and allow the initiative time to bear fruit. It's a good idea to match analysis timeframes with the company's financial year.

**How?** The process is described in the section above entitled "State of the art".

**Who?** All the stakeholders should be involved. The forecasting process can even be put on the agenda of the first project steering committee meeting.

### Recommendations

- Identify the type of training for which it is appropriate to carry out this kind of evaluation
- Produce measurements, even if they're not perfect
- Involve managers and, where possible, the finance department

✧ **Believers, but not church-goers!**

Although most trainers think evaluation is useful, few have built it into the structure of their approach.

As we have seen, it is widely applied to learner satisfaction, and is making steady progress at “learning” and “behaviour” levels.

***So is there life after level 3? And more importantly, why do professionals who aspire to become business partners use levels 4 and 5 so seldom?***

**Six “good”  
reasons  
not to  
evaluate**

In all there are six main perceived obstacles to training evaluation:

1. Insufficient demand
2. Fear of the results
3. Complexity
4. Implementation costs
5. Work (over)load
6. Lack of skills

## Insufficient demand

When you look at the expectations of senior managers (96% want to see a demonstration of how training positively affects business), it's always possible to say that insufficient demand is "not your problem". Many of the professionals we've interviewed say that demand for evaluation is usually expressed as a passing request rather than a formal one. The question is, how long can this go on? Another common argument is the difficulty most sponsors have in precisely describing what they expect from training, and in supplying us with genuinely useful indicators.

Unfortunately, these responses are the sign of a defensive attitude to evaluation. We've seen how it helps training departments to define and implement their strategy, so it's up to us to take the initiative and educate our in-house clients. As demand increases, we should be able to hand over most of the implementation process to them.

## Fear of the results

What if evaluation showed that some popular training packages actually make a very small contribution to business? That would never do! This is a prime source of concern that many people deal with by procrastinating. But make no mistake; sponsors are now quite able to assess the value of training. Paradoxically, it's a lack of evaluation that is most likely to undermine our position, by allowing training with low added value to continue.

Another source of worry is the relationship with sponsors. The imbalance created by the client/supplier model limits people to measuring their own performance (levels 1 to 3). As soon as we start collaborating with our sponsors, we become jointly responsible for hitting jointly defined targets: it's a new kind of partnership.

## Complexity

Collecting and processing data undeniably becomes more complex as we move from one level to the next in the Kirkpatrick & Phillips models. We also know that it's the data from the upper levels that creates the most value for sponsors.

And yet, when we design new measurement protocols, let's not forget where we started out. Let's keep things simple and flexible: there will always be time to add functions later on. An over-complex assessment protocol is often the sign of an overambitious or poorly designed solution. Another pitfall is wanting to please all the stakeholders from the word go; too much consultation means you have to include far too many indicators... and these are then often underused.

Last but not least, always work hand in hand with your IT department to automate everything that can be automated without losing sight of your goals: control, decision-making, value creation. Let's not put the cart before the horse by falling into the trap of an excessively techno-driven solution: it sometimes takes longer, it's often more complex, and it's always more expensive.

## Implementation costs

Surely we shouldn't take on a new evaluation system at a time of budget restrictions ("More with Less")? Paradoxically, we should; more than ever before. Making the right choices and demonstrating the contribution training makes to business is not the best way of preserving training budgets, it's the **ONLY** way!

But as with the issue of complexity, we have to tread carefully. Building the right implementation sequence is a crucial step to avoid overspending in the short term. Most solutions on the market are offered in SaaS (Software as a Service) mode, which is less constraining, cheaper and more flexible than insourced solutions.

Insourced solutions are only possible if we carefully calculate the TCO (Total Cost of Ownership, which includes design, configuration, user training, management, maintenance and functional updates) and compare it to the cost of outsourced solutions.

## Work (over)load

*"More with less!"* The phrase is repeated like a mantra. "How do you expect me to do that as well?", training managers ask. "We barely have enough time for tasks that are central to our brief!"

Thinking of evaluation as "extra work" is absurd. Denying that it represents a significant workload is equally so. How can we deal with this apparent paradox? There are three avenues we can explore.

- Once again, the first involves spreading out the implementation of new evaluation protocols. Given the trends observed over the past decade, we can say that it's realistic to press on and go as fast as possible. Company bosses want evolution, not revolution.
- The second avenue is closely bound up with the upper tiers of the evaluation model. It's sponsors and managers who are best able to carry out level 3 and level 4 assessments. We have to increase their awareness, train them, provide them with tools and support... but we mustn't do their job for them. This represents an initial investment that always shows rapid returns.
- The third solution involves getting help with implementing new evaluation approaches. Expert advice or appropriate tools will be welcome allies: they'll prevent you from having to reinvent the wheel and falling into common traps.

## Lack of skills

A study<sup>1</sup> by Bersin & Associates reveals that 56% of HR professionals consider their skill at processing and interpreting data to be "weak" and only 6% consider them to be "strong".

*"Nobody on my team has the necessary statistical skills to implement these kinds of evaluations. If they lack a proper scientific basis, they can neither be thorough nor credible."*

In most cases, statements like this are motivated by the desire to do things properly. The rest of the time, they are convenient excuses for not taking the plunge.

Another question that always keeps coming up is "should we have an evaluation specialist in the training department?" The answer is yes... at the beginning. Appointing a project manager in charge of implementing a new evaluation strategy is a wise decision. He will gather information about requirements, design the

<sup>1</sup> J. Bersin & Associates – High Impact HR Organization – Bersin & Associates, 2011

dashboards, and run the initial trials. But his first task will be to manage change, dealing in particular with his colleagues in the training department. To achieve this, he will have to work alongside all the different people in the department and be careful never to behave too much like an “expert”, which would risk isolating him and compromising the project. It is important to identify, at the outset, the indicators that show that he has completed his task. When evaluation is fully integrated into instructional design, this is a sign that the project has been a success.

Further down the line, if using the system requires particular skills, it may be necessary to have an administrator dedicated to these operations.

On the other hand, putting together a team dedicated to evaluation sends a very bad message to the organisation.

It implies that only experts can carry out evaluation, which is disempowering for the managers we want to involve in the process.

Having said this, there's nothing to stop you from having a quality control team whose job is to check the compliance of in-house practices, including evaluation. To conclude on the question of skills, evaluation is a great opportunity for all professionals to develop a new type of expertise. It's a challenge, but as Seth Godin<sup>2</sup> says, “When was the last time you did something for the first time?”

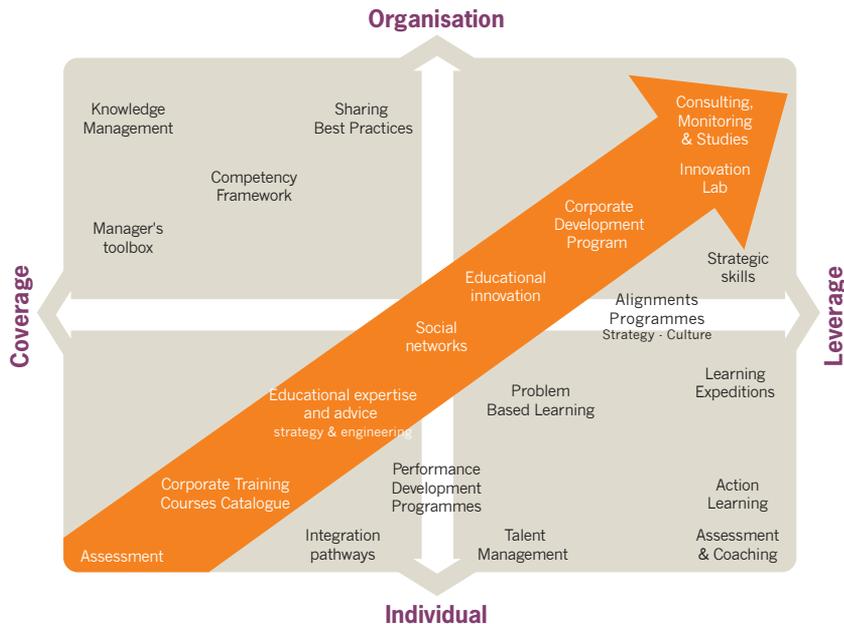
***Think big. Start small. Move fast! This is our conclusion on the common obstacles mentioned above. Let's be as ambitious as we can, and as realistic as we need to be. Every step towards more thorough evaluation will bring significant rewards.***

2 S. Godin – *Poke the Box – The Domino Project*, 2011

# Demons- trating value

## Two types of approach

In a previous publication<sup>1</sup>, we proposed the following diagram to distinguish the areas in which Corporate Learning operates, especially in the context of a Corporate University.



1 Dufour & Wargnier – *Corporate Universities, From Business-driven Learning to Learning-Driven Business* – CrossKnowledge, 2010

The horizontal axis makes a distinction between *Coverage* and *Leverage*.

**Coverage** involves mapping the knowledge, practices and skills of a company in order to harmonise training, formalisation and sharing. For example, we find the training catalogue in the segment devoted to individual development, and Knowledge Management in the segment devoted to organisational development. “Coverage” is an on-going process whose aim is to optimise coverage of the company’s skills base.

The aim of **Leverage**, on the other hand, is to support, or even to anticipate, corporate strategy. Here we find activities such as Innovation Labs, some aspects of skills development, business intelligence monitoring, and strategic alignment programmes. It’s a highly responsive approach, and one that produces training packages that have a very short shelf-life once they’ve achieved their goals.

This distinction clearly invites us to adopt two different approaches to measuring value. On the one hand, we're looking at validating a standard defined by the company; on the other, we're looking at finding operational solutions to strategic challenges.

This is why we propose an evaluation model that distinguishes between "validating standards" and "contribution to business". This duality echoes one of the distinctions posited in the KPMT model.

### ✧ 1. Validating standards

We are assuming that the company has mapped out its key knowledge and/or its skills base. Evaluation then consists of assessing how well staff members cope with the various different aspects of their roles.

This accreditation process is implemented in the following way:

- Map out key skills and knowledge
- Define corporate standards
- Design evaluation protocols
- Communicate & use the data obtained

The company defines its standards in relation to its competitive environment and its market ambitions. They must be updated to reflect changes in external parameters and in corporate strategy: often enough to ensure they are relevant, and not too often so as not to affect the coherence of the system.

Standards relate to knowledge and practices, and thus correspond to levels 2 and 3 of the Kirkpatrick model. It is, however, advisable to demonstrate the contribution made by a standard. To do this, the impact of a practice should be assessed by surveying a representative panel (test group, observations, etc.) at level 4 of our reference model. It is then easy to compare this value to the training investment made to achieve the standard, and thus to calculate nominal ROI.

These two assessments are made **only once**. Only when standards are revised is it appropriate to repeat the process. This means that our approach satisfies not only our sponsors, who are eager to be shown hard figures, but also our teams, who will have no further work to do in this respect once the measurements have been made.

Standards are defined according to the nature of the skills they relate to. They fall into the following categories:

- **Regulatory skills:** these are imposed by the legislation of the country or the regulations of the industry the company operates in. These skills are often highly normative (hygiene, safety, ethics, etc.) and can consume a large chunk of the training budget.
- **Fundamental skills:** these define the standard required in order to operate credibly and sustainably in a particular market. Adhering to them is thus simply a question of survival for the company. They can be generic (accounting, management, sales, etc.) or specific (knowledge of products, production processes, etc.). They also include induction of new recruits and training for staff appointed to new roles.
- **Distinctive skills:** these skills allow the company to show how it differs from the competition and to affirm its superiority. These are less numerous and more sensitive, and have an impact on competitive edge and Blue Ocean strategies.

Standards must naturally be embraced, if not validated, by all the stakeholders. Leaving out a stakeholder almost always creates problems at the deployment stage, especially when it involves line managers or staff representatives.

The accreditation process (including tools and methods) is then set in stone, in collaboration with the people responsible for evaluation. It will then inevitably be tested and fine-tuned before being deployed. The final step involves industrialising the process as much as possible.

Communication is a key phase in its own right. One should never underestimate the concerns and misunderstandings that can arise when a new accreditation process is introduced.

Building and deploying a real communication plan is always money well spent: we'll look at how to do this later.

### **Make them laugh!**

At the Corporate University Summit in Paris in 2012, the director of the Corporate University of a large high-tech organisation said he had built his training model on accreditation. All the resources necessary for skills acquisition were placed at the disposal of staff: information, content, training activities, advice, and in-house support. Staff members were then responsible for their own accreditation process. *"My boss doesn't care about having trained staff; what he cares about is their performance!"* Significantly, the university reports directly to the group's marketing department.

### **A few examples of standards and related protocols:**

- Machine operators score at least 80% when tested on how well they know machine X. Evaluation is via a supervised on-line questionnaire to be completed within a set time. It asks 25 questions, drawn randomly from a set of 60.
- A branch manager gets a score of at least 4.2/5 for a skill ["Running a Meeting"] as part of his 360° feedback.
- Accreditation at "Expert" level is obtained following observations made by an in-house expert who fills in a grid describing twelve key points relating to "practice P". To obtain accreditation, a score of ten or more is required. The staff member being assessed is expected to describe each key point in detail.

### **➤ 2. Contribution to business**

Obviously, the changing environments in which companies operate take training departments beyond their role of simply building and maintaining a catalogue. Even if we ignore the clear need to anticipate tomorrow's business, there will always be situations that escape this structured accreditation process. We classify these under the term "**contribution to business**". They can involve the whole company, especially when it undertakes major strategic reorientations: mergers, internationalisation, restructuring, and so on. They can also be focused on a given area: a particular business sector, a team, or a geographical zone.

The term "contribution to business" might imply that the related approaches are a priority, or that they are more important than those that belong to the "validation of standards" category. We must beware of this interpretation.

In reality, if the work is not properly carried out on the Standards side, more business issues will inevitably arise. Without firm foundations, it's impossible to build long-term performance development.

### **How it works**

Several aspects have changed in relation to traditional training practices.

**Interactions** with sponsors must clearly be considered as a strategic requirement. Just "taking orders" for training is incompatible with the ambition to make a real contribution to business performance. This implies a real understanding of the ins and outs of the business on the part of the training teams. This is where the term Business Partner takes on its real meaning.

As for the **approach**, we have to learn how to reverse the order in which we read our models.

A new version of the ADDIE<sup>2</sup> model has to be drawn up in order to place evaluation at the centre of the instructional design process. Early evaluation should, for example, make it possible to target and adjust the approach. As for the Kirkpatrick & Phillips models, we should begin with the upper levels to determine first the expected impact on business, then the critical behaviour that needs to change, and lastly the skills that need to be developed. This is how we can forecast the contribution of training: always at level 4, sometimes at level 5.

The **pace** of training needs to be significantly speeded up. One cannot seriously imagine that a business issue can wait for the classic training cycle to run its course (collecting information on needs, aggregation, prioritisation, budget, validation, etc.). It requires a far more rapid decision-making and budget management process.

Processing this type of training requires the following steps:

- Describing a business-related issue formulated by the sponsor
- Analysing impact on work practices for the target group
- Identifying all the initiatives that need to be undertaken to address the issue
- Validating and highlighting the contribution that will be made by the training (critical behaviour)
- Defining training goals (skills for development)

Contribution to business mainly concerns level 4 of the Kirkpatrick model. It obviously cannot exist without level 3 evaluation, because transfer is the necessary condition for impact on business. This is why we talk more about “transformation plans” than about “training plans” when we describe these kinds of initiatives.

ROI (at level 5) is to be calculated for initiatives that consume large amounts of resources (budgets, teams, infrastructure, managers, etc.). The training department has to define the point at which it will begin making this calculation.

An interesting recent practice in large corporate groups consists of inviting members of the finance department to the first steering committee meeting. This makes it possible, in collaboration with the sponsors, to select indicators and build a business model for the initiative. Also, this approach demonstrates the business-oriented attitude of the training team to the whole company.

2 The ADDIE model describes the different phases in instructional design: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation and Evaluation

## A few examples

### Very low productivity and incidents at closing time / Fast food chain

- Training: new closing time procedures
- Target: all teams working at closing time
- SMART: 30% reduction in overtime, with no adverse effects on health and safety standards, within two months of training

### Increasing loss of clients due to delivery errors / Clothing mail order firm

- Training: new organisation for the department, delivery order software updated
- Target: keyboard operators and supervisors
- SMART: the number of returned orders due to keying errors dropped to below 3% by the end of the financial year

### Market price positioning / Specialist building supplies retailer

- Training: presentation of the new price list to builders
- Target: sales force and branch managers
- SMART: new prices accepted as part of the annual contract with all builder clients at the end of December

## 3. Combining the two types of evaluation

A training need should thus be expressed by our sponsors in one of two ways:

- As a development initiative aimed at achieving standards (induction training, training for a new role, implementation of a new process, product launch, etc.)
- As an initiative designed to address a business issue

### The art of combination

Naturally, this dichotomy is only theoretical, and in many cases it will be necessary to combine the two approaches.

“Standards-oriented” training will often need to be adapted according to the environment where it will be used. In international organisations, a glocalisation strategy is an essential condition for successful standards deployment. It ensures corporate messages are consistent, while taking account of local culture, resources and training practices. This explains the widespread use of the “*Suitcase Program*” format, which conveys core messages, defines adjustable parameters, and provides local staff with guidance on how to adapt training initiatives.

Obviously, the level of stringency on standards must remain absolutely constant. Using approaches based on new learning technologies (e-learning, online assessment, etc.) ensures a high level of consistency in terms of both message and standards validation.

Similarly, if we adhere strictly to the definition of “business-oriented” training, it should always be custom designed. This does not, however, preclude using ready-made activities from the main catalogue. For example, a company facing aggressive competitive pricing can ask its training department to design an *ad hoc* solution, and it would be absurd not to use existing modules on negotiation techniques. By the same token, activities specifically designed to address a business issue can then be added to the “Standards” catalogue. For the company addressing the pricing issue, however, evaluation will naturally focus on business indicators (discounts/margins, terms of purchase, etc.)

A final key point is that it’s vital to manage your training portfolio intelligently. It’s tempting to migrate as many modules as possible from “Business” to “Standards”; it seems like a good way of making your investments pay their way. But for this to work, you have to unpick your “business” modules and pull out all the skills-related training activities. It’s then possible to add these activities to the “Standards” catalogue, to be reused along with the relevant evaluation protocols.

### **There’s no such thing as an ideal mix!**

Budget allocations commonly show the following distribution in terms of types of training:

- 50% of training is devoted to Validation of Standards
- 30% of training addresses business-related issues, even if it is seldom properly evaluated in terms of its contribution
- 20% of training is carried out without a clear link to standards-related or business-related objectives

Defining a universal mix is not a viable option. Factors such as the economic situation, staff turnover and seniority, rapidly changing or highly technical expertise, and initial accreditation levels among different target groups, will have a significant impact on how the two types are weighted.

**Having looked at standards validation and contribution to business performance, we will now explore two further evaluation territories: stakeholder perceptions and efficiency of training modules.**

# Perception

The aim here is to look at the **Reaction** level in the Kirkpatrick & Phillips models, and to make some adjustments to it. We will extend the scope of this evaluation and add indicators that take account of new training approaches.

## ✦ Targets

It is vital to extend this evaluation to all stakeholders, not only learners but also sponsors and line managers, senior managers, internal and external service providers, HR and local support networks.

It's important to take learner satisfaction into account, but overestimating its value is both dangerous and inappropriate. Given the controversy raised by the positive causality principle in the Kirkpatrick model, we must analyse satisfaction with due caution. In the first instance, we know that a very high satisfaction score can hide a lack of self-awareness and consequently reflect low learning performance. If he just focuses on getting good scores, the trainer risks crossing the fine line between educational excellence and crowd-pleasing. We should also be careful not to give learners indicators they are ill-equipped to evaluate. Learners should not be asked to evaluate fundamentals such as course structure, course duration, and choice of modality.

For each of the other groups, the idea is to draw inspiration from basic marketing principles and apply strict segmentation: perception surveys must be adapted to their targets in terms of timing, media, choice of questions, and response method. It's a big mistake to believe that a happy learner necessarily means a happy sponsor. We should be very careful to evaluate sponsor perceptions, not only at steering committee meetings, but also by setting up focus groups and issuing specific questionnaires. Assessing sponsor satisfaction is the best way to improve the quality of our service and our positioning. Here are some of the areas of analysis that must always feature in our surveys:

- Scoping: how well do we understand and integrate needs? How adaptable are we? Do we have a results-driven approach? Etc.
- Consultancy: how useful are our proposals? How creative are we? How available are we? Do we offer adequate support initiatives? Etc.
- Project management: how good are we at sticking to schedules and budget? How useful are our project management meetings? Is our reporting process effective? Etc.
- Communication: appreciation of PR media, format, frequency, quality of information, etc.

### ➤ How to proceed

- Standardise most of the questionnaire items given to learners in order to produce coherent indicators that can be applied to all training initiatives.
- Administer questionnaires on line to facilitate and speed up processing.
- Begin by using the tools already available in the company before thinking about making investments.
- Build questionnaires for two different evaluation points:
  - end-of-session questionnaires to evaluate the quality of a training activity
  - post-course feedback questionnaires to evaluate the quality of the training initiative in general
- Individual activities should be simply and rapidly evaluated to help measure the performance of the entire training initiative. All too often, evaluations are only made at the end of face-to-face sessions. In the minds of learners, filling in an evaluation questionnaire is still associated with the end of the course. Not surprisingly, this has a significant negative effect on all the collaborative and transfer-related activities that may take place after the face-to-face sessions are over.
- Integrate indicators covering new training modalities, especially distance learning and collaborative learning. These modalities have specific traits that must be reflected in your indicators: user-friendliness of the learning environment, legibility, accessibility, etc.
- Avoid mixing indicators covering widely different areas. It's absurd to lump together educational effectiveness and appreciations relating to logistics or how good the food was at lunchtime.

## Efficiency

This refers to the ability to optimise the results of a training initiative within the limits of our resources. We might compare this with the Olympic spirit: our "*Citius, Altius, Fortius*" is to train more people, on more subjects, more quickly, in more places, in a more personalised, innovative, accessible, collaborative, fun way... and ideally more cheaply. This means it's vital to be able to rationalise and unify our approach, selecting the most relevant modules and combining them intelligently.

It's obviously easier to show that a course is 25% cheaper than to prove that it's 25% more efficient. In the "More for Less" scenario, the temptation to focus on what costs "Less" will always be stronger than the need to demonstrate that you're offering "More" (i.e. value creation).

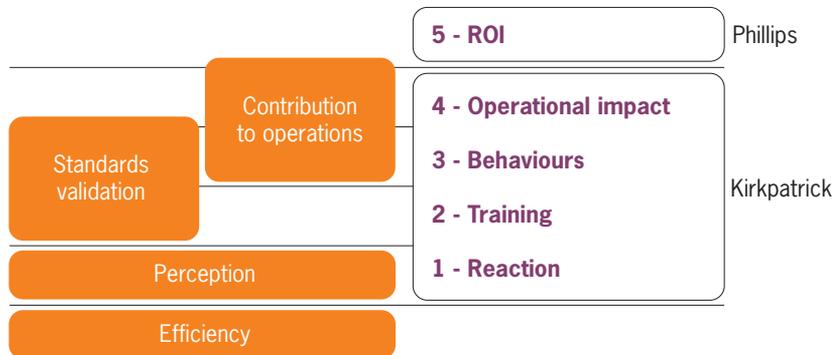
The term “efficiency” covers all the indicators that describe the following performance factors:

- **Coverage:** how effectively the training is delivered to its target learners (logins, participation and completion rates), accreditation rates, speed of deployment, etc.
- **Use:** level of use of the initiative and each of its modalities (time spent training, level of contribution, etc.) and qualitative approach (accessibility, training behaviour among different learner groups, training environment, etc.)
- **Quality:** compliance with the company’s quality policy, compliance with training department standards and management principles, consistency with HR protocols, etc.
- **Cost:** all design, production, deployment and maintenance costs, *per capita* costs, costs per hour, break-even point, etc.

ROI is calculated simply by dividing value created by all the costs listed in the **relevant** section of the dashboard.

## Evaluation territories

To sum up, the four territories described above are positioned in the following way with respect to our reference model.



## List of evaluation methods

Just as there is a periodic table classifying chemical elements, we propose a list of evaluation methods. It is obviously neither exhaustive, nor definitive. The world of training changes very fast, especially under the influence of new learning technologies. It can nevertheless be useful for training professionals to vary their evaluation approaches in order to validate the performance of a training package more effectively.

As the most important indicators from the sponsors' point of view relate to business, they will naturally be found in Standards Validation and Contribution to Business, and will include both ROE and ROI.

In parallel, a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators specific to the areas of Perception and Efficiency can also be used.

### ✧ Efficiency

- Attendance sheet
- Tracking data from training platform (LMS)
- Web Analytics (data relating to transactions on a collaborative platform)
- Timeframes (time to training, time to skill, time to performance, etc.)
- Accreditation rate (Population x Number of subjects)
- Steering committee and Project Plan monitoring (quality of deliverables, schedule, etc.)
- Monitoring financial indicators (hourly cost, *per capita* cost, etc.)
- Business Plan and financial control

### ✧ Standards Validation

This list focuses on levels 2 and 3 of the Kirkpatrick & Phillips model:

- Initial testing (mapping knowledge and skills prior to training)
- Summative testing (level of knowledge and skills after training)
- Self-perception (what the learner thinks he's learned)
- Case studies – Simulations – Role play
- Research followed up with a report
- Meeting with line manager
- Annual performance review/Performance Management
- Testing familiarity with a procedure
- Workplace observation

- Supervised Personal Development Plan
- Specific task supervised by line manager
- Cross-Perception (analysis of work practices by peers)
- Assessment Centre
- Co-development groups (carrying out success analysis and looking for solutions collaboratively)
- 360° feedback questionnaire
- Facilitating a training initiative on a particular subject
- Networks of experts and communities of practice
- HR impacts (engagement, GP2W, talent management, succession planning, etc.)
- ROI relating to accreditation of a standard

#### ❖ Contribution to Business

For this type of training, the indicators are mainly business-focused. Selected in collaboration with department managers, it is naturally they who choose the protocols they will use to evaluate contribution.

- Monitoring business indicators: productivity, timeframes, quality, turnover, client satisfaction, margins, etc.
- Measurement of ROI

We have nevertheless prepared a list focusing on levels 3 and 4 to complete this analysis.

- Test group (v. experimental group)
- Workplace observation
- Assessment Centre
- Supervised Personal Development Plan
- Specific task supervised by line manager
- Annual performance reviews/Performance Management
- Participation in formalising new processes
- Contribution to communities of practice
- RH impacts (engagement, stress reduction, employer branding, etc.)
- Measurement of ROI

# Evaluating multimodal systems

A growing number of training approaches are now in multimodal format. This doesn't just mean blended learning, but the intelligent combination of:

- Face-to-face and distance learning modules
- Synchronous and asynchronous activities
- Information, training and collaboration

This definition might imply a particular approach to evaluation. In reality, we proceed in the same way as for all the other formats. We focus our evaluation on the ability of a training path to validate standards or to improve business performance, and we use the same evaluation protocols.

On the other hand, we add Efficiency and Perception indicators to take into account the specific nature of multimodal approaches. A few of these are listed below.

## ➤ Efficiency

- Usage rates (enrolment, login, completion, time spent training, etc.)
- Activity on the platform (number of pages viewed, number of clicks, number of downloads, etc.)
- Use of resources (viewed and/or downloaded)
- Feedback and comments ("Likes", Stars, etc.)
- Number and frequency of contributions
- Questions to experts and comments on the quality of their answers
- Rate of spontaneous (rather than elicited) events

## ➤ Perception

- Quality of learning environment
- Accessibility and design of collaborative features
- Perceived quality of content (usefulness, visual appearance, level, etc.)
- Quality of communication (relevance, frequency, format, etc.)
- Quality of learner support (tutoring, guidelines, hotline, dashboard, etc.)

A study<sup>3</sup> carried out by CrossKnowledge in 2011 shows that the most widely used distance learning evaluation indicators (for e-learning, multimodal learning, etc.) are those that relate to use: login rates, completion rates, and number of hours of distance training. Satisfaction is measured about 60% of the time, which is less than for the older formats but shows a desire to integrate the learner's point of view. As for knowledge acquisition, at 35% it remains relatively little used although it is

3  
CrossKnowledge,  
Fefaur & Ipsos  
First e-learning  
Barometer  
in Europe –  
CrossKnowledge,  
2011 – In  
collaboration  
with AIDP for Italy,  
Learning &  
Skills Group for  
the UK  
and Aedipe for  
Spain

progressing rapidly. It is more than likely that the technical capabilities of distance-learning tools will make it possible to speed up the different measurement levels.

On the other hand, a particular kind of evaluation will be possible during the scoping phase. Its aim is to validate the relevance and user-friendliness of the different training modalities. This provides a clear basis for deciding which activities are most likely to ensure the training meets its objectives. In certain extreme cases, it is possible to opt for a classic face-to-face format, due to insufficient tools, time, or staff to justify multimodal development.

The parameters that help to carry out this analysis partly result from an analysis of the training environment. For the sake of completeness, it has been necessary to add variables relating to technological solutions available and to the L&D team's experience of multimodal approaches. These variables have been described and listed on a scorecard put together by Alberon Partners to validate the use of different modalities within a training initiative.

## Evaluating informal learning

### **How can we evaluate the 90% of learning that lies outside structured training frameworks?**

According to the 70:20:10 model, 70% of skills development occurs in the workplace and 20% via human interactions, mainly with one's line manager. Evaluating the performance of informal learning thus seems perfectly legitimate.

And yet members of Internet Time Alliance<sup>4</sup> see ROI as a relic from the industrial era and consider it pointless to factor in informal learning. This doesn't make them into daydreamers; they are simply proposing something different. We've left behind a world dominated by processes and entered a world ruled by conversation, where information is overabundant.

Rather than invest time in evaluation after the fact, it's much more profitable to make companies into true learning enterprises. Jay Cross encourages the creation of what he calls Learnscapes. The idea is to make the work environment conducive to on-going development. It involves learning to find, process and share information instead of trying to memorise it: learning to learn. And this really changes the status quo.

<sup>4</sup> Internet Time Alliance is a group of researchers and professionals: Jay Cross, Jane Hart, Harold Jarche, Charles Jennings, Clark Quinn and Paul Simbeck-Hampson. They have published *The Working Smarter Fieldbook*, which is regularly updated on their website [www.internetti-mealliance.com](http://www.internetti-mealliance.com)

### **Jay Cross's Learnscapes<sup>5</sup>**

*Knowledge Workers* are said to spend a third of their time at work looking for the information they need to carry out their jobs or to identify and contact experts who can help them. This doesn't include time wasted recreating processes that already exist somewhere else in the company. Jay Cross believes that we can improve the productivity of an organisation by 20% - 30% if we can speed up information flow, drastically reduce the time required for finding the right information, cut e-mails by half, and stop reinventing what already exists.

5 Jay Cross –  
*Informal Learning*  
– Pfeiffer, 2005

# Optimising performance

Optimising training performance is the subject of a large number of publications; although it focuses on evaluation, the bibliography at the end of this book clearly reflects this. This chapter is designed to help you remember three key success factors in our optimisation process:

- Scoping out requirements
- Organising evaluation
- Communicating continuously

## Scoping out requirements

In their book<sup>1</sup>, Wick, Pollock, Jefferson & Flanagan consider that the first source of training performance is the ability to express the objectives of a course in terms of improved behaviour and impact on business.

We all know that the quality not only of evaluation but also of the entire training initiative directly depends on our ability to assign SMART objectives.

This is why it's crucial to adopt a collaborative approach. The quality of our service, as well as our positioning, depends on it.

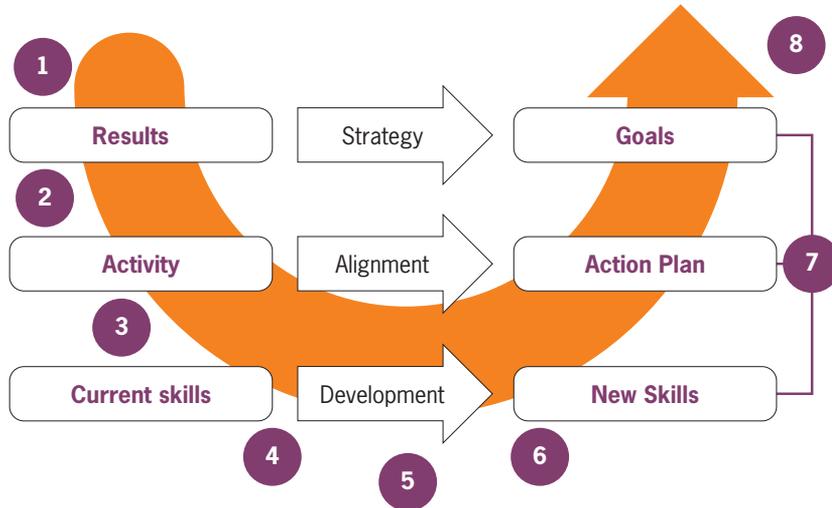
The purpose of the scoping phase is to define a contract describing objectives, indicators and resources, but even more importantly the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved.

We sometimes find it difficult to follow this approach through, which creates an imbalance in our relationship with the sponsor... and this is never a good thing. Lack of time or lack of courage partly explain the fact that many people neglect critical points such as:

- Asking all the necessary questions to ensure perfect understanding of the issues involved.
- Challenging requirements if necessary. Many “needs” turn out to be ill-founded when subjected to a thorough scoping procedure. We might think this puts the training team in an awkward position, but this isn't the case; a well-argued refusal can often bring us extra credibility.
- Ensuring that the sponsor is fully committed to the principles of the initiative and the rollout plan.
- Selecting a small number of relevant indicators and sharing evaluation protocols.

1 Wick, Pollock, Jefferson & Flanagan – *The Six Disciplines of Breakthrough Learning, How to Turn Training and Development into Business Results* – John Wiley & Sons (Pfeiffer), 2006

The model below shows how we can structure our approach.



### ➤ Approach

1. Understand the strategy and all the business-related issues
2. Describe the impacts of the strategy; identify the root cause and critical behaviour
3. Analyse and isolate the potential contribution made by the training
4. Prioritise skills to be developed in order to address the issues identified
5. Perform an analysis of the training environment
6. Identify available resources and potential obstacles – Define a nominal schedule
7. Define objectives at the different levels of the reference model – Select relevant indicators and evaluation protocols
8. Sign off on the scoping note before drafting the training specifications

“Finding the root cause” means not taking the sponsor’s words at face value. Focusing on symptoms can lead us to neglect other causes, or to treat the symptoms but not the source of the problem.

Another way of looking at what’s at stake when planning a training initiative involves highlighting the consequences of a major malfunction. Upskilling the target group so that they will be able to tackle such a problem is often a source of value creation.

### **A new analysis template**

Skills Development Director – Insurance sector

*“As soon as we started using the analysis template, we noticed two positive results. The first was that the people we were talking to became aware of how complex our job is and how thorough we have to be. Some were actually amazed when they saw how many questions we had to ask – and how well thought out the questions were – in order to provide them with an appropriate solution. The second positive impact was that we had to take a real interest in their jobs and their strategy. The initiative was extremely well received and everyone willingly took part. In the end, this simple tool allowed us to improve the performance of our training, and also to considerably enhance our image. People no longer saw us as just trainers showing them a catalogue; they saw us as business partners.”*

## **Organising evaluation**

Training isn't an event, it's a process. This means that it is reasonable to plan evaluation protocols in relation to the probable delivery of expected benefits.

### **↳ Sequencing evaluation**

In the first instance, we perform an analysis of the training environment, which will tell us about the variables that influence training performance (training strategy, attributes of the target audience and their working environment, including the level of involvement of managers).

In most cases, it is wise to evaluate the initial level of the target group. This can be done via tests and observations that are then correlated with business indicators provided by the sponsor. This initial marker plays a vital role in mobilising the stakeholders and measuring progress.

Evaluation protocols will then naturally follow in the order described in our model.

- Knowledge acquisition
- Knowledge retention
- Analysis of transfer conditions
- Changes in work behaviour
- Impact on business indicators
- Evaluation of perception by stakeholders
- Evaluation of the efficiency of the training initiative
- Calculation of ROI (Sometimes)

### ❖ Deciding who does what

We've seen that it's up to us to implement certain evaluation protocols, while others can only be performed by managers or by the sponsor. It's vital to clearly and formally define the work schedule and responsibilities of everyone involved, in order to avoid focusing the evaluation on the lower levels of the model, and especially to avoid concentrating on the end of the training course. If we did this, our evaluation would seem more like an autopsy than a process analysis.

What's more, if managers take an active part in evaluation throughout the training initiative, this has a significant impact on their involvement in the transfer process.

### ❖ Managing knowledge transfer

The most important contribution made by the studies carried out on the Kirkpatrick model is the way they identify factors that influence the learning process. These factors relate to:

- The individual: what we have called the “attributes of the target audience”: motivation to learn, needs, expectations, opportunities to apply new knowledge and skills, etc.
- Training: quality of briefing sessions and scoping, choice of modalities, etc.
- Work environment: involvement of managers, support from colleagues, tools available, etc.

To help with this analysis, in 2000 Elwood Holton produced the LTSI (*Learning Transfer System Inventory*). This is a tool that analyses the factors that influence learning transfer. It includes 62 questions grouped around 16 factors related to the elements listed above. It has the advantage that it can be used both at the analysis stage and as part of quality management during the deployment of a training initiative.

In practical terms, it plays a determining role during the instructional design phase as it integrates all the elements that will motivate the learner to commit to the course (Personal Development Plan) and that will provide him with the opportunities and means to apply what he has learned.

The other thing we have to watch out for is the involvement of managers and their ability to support training initiatives. It's obviously out of the question to do their job for them. On the other hand, it's up to us to train and inform them, to provide them with the necessary tools, and to assist them with their support and evaluation roles.

### ✦ Supporting change

To ensure that training has long term effects, it must be seen as a change initiative. The eight-step change management process described by Kotter should inspire us to promote, support and consolidate the change process with our training, especially by seeking to secure rapid victories.

## Constant communication

What is the point of evaluation if not to communicate, manage and make decisions together? It's wrong to think that it's "mission accomplished" as soon as the evaluation has been delivered at the end of a training initiative. To be effective, communication on evaluation has to take place at all stages of the process, with the following aims:

- Making the evaluation meaningful; saying what it's for, what it is and what it is not. To achieve this, some companies put together an "evaluation charter".
- Deciding who gets what information and what has to remain confidential.
- Presenting the benefits of evaluation for each stakeholder.
- Explaining how the evaluation works to ensure coherent, relevant results.
- Giving the evaluators instructions for each tool and medium they use.
- Ensuring that the sponsor informs everyone about early successes (rapid victories) to keep all the stakeholders fully committed to the initiative.
- Publishing testimonials by champions to boost motivation.
- Sharing results and making it clear what we can learn from them (use different formats for each target group; make clear, jargon-free presentations and avoiding overloading them with data).
- Being transparent and pragmatic if goals are not being met.
- Never announcing bad decisions, only good ones.
- Celebrating results.

We often see a lack of quantitative results in the first weeks of a training initiative. Investments have been made, resources have been deployed... and we're still unable to provide results. A properly constructed evaluation plan allows you to provide important information at any time; initial skills overview, analysis of training environment, or early perceptions from target groups.

In the case of long training programmes, it's interesting to show trends before you can produce results. Setting up focus groups a few weeks into the programme not

only provides a useful insight into user perceptions so that fine-tuning can be carried out; it also enables you to collect comments on the early impacts of the training path.

In reality, in parallel with the evaluation protocol schedule, a communication plan should be prepared for each training path. As well as being an effective organisational tool, this “marketing” approach is a chance to diversify expertise and forge strong links with the people involved.

# Conclusion

It's time to demonstrate that our mission isn't just a noble one... it's also a profitable one. It creates value on an individual, collective and corporate level.

Rethinking evaluation protocols necessarily involves an initial outlay, but all the teams who have carried out such a process can testify to the significant rewards it brings. Companies that analyse training performance are the ones that make the most significant improvements to what they offer their staff, and more generally to their approach to human capital management.

Before leaving you with a list of fascinating books on the subject, here are ten key points that will help you avoid getting lost on the way:

1. Evaluation is a project management and decision-making tool
2. Evaluation is collaborative
3. Evaluation always begins by defining goals
4. Evaluation is not an expert training skill... and should never be allowed to become one
5. Tools are there to support evaluation, not the other way round; never put the end before the means
6. Evaluation will be simple if we don't complicate things unnecessarily
7. To evaluate effectively, you have to start evaluating at the outset
8. Evaluate as little as possible... but evaluate what really matters
9. Communicate constantly to support the process and make it meaningful
10. Make sure you celebrate your successes!

***We hope you'll have many successes to celebrate...***

## Acknowledgements

We extend our warmest thanks to all the CrossKnowledge clients we have talked to about the delicate question of evaluation, and more broadly about training-driven value creation. We thank them for the contribution they have made to this book by asking questions, challenging our points of view, sharing their experiences, and simply supporting our initiative.

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He is CEO of Alberon Partners, a consultancy firm, since 2012. He supports HR and training teams as they define their human capital development strategies, and helps them to implement multimodal solutions that respond to major corporate challenges and take account of the tough realities of today's work environments.

In 2005, he joined CrossKnowledge (the leading European distance learning provider) as Director of Customer Business Development, and was promoted to Director of Business Consulting in 2009. His twofold expertise in HR consultancy and training has helped the company to grow rapidly, both in France and internationally.

Before this, Jérôme was Managing Director of the DOit group (management and HR consultancy), where his job involved providing skills development consultancy, running seminars and conferences, and coaching managers. He had previously been Associate Director of a consultancy firm specialising in strategy and sales performance, and Operations Manager for a restaurant chain.

The profound changes in the corporate world and their impacts on HR and training practices are an endless source of fascination for him in his work.



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