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Optimising the return on your training investment:

How to increase the prospect of sustainable behaviour change.

Organisations are sometimes hesitant to invest in training and development that is not technical knowledge, the belief being that training is not worth the return on investment. I have previously unpacked my thoughts on [this](#). I would however like to expand on this somewhat. I believe the efficiency of training is affected by several factors, and it is important that HR / IR practitioners review these:

When you select training for your staff, ensure that you have reviewed the following:

1) Is this training suitable for my employees, that is does it meet our need?

Any training consultant / provider worth their salt should be able to listen to your concerns and needs and recommend a solution that is the best fit to your needs, for both the individuals / team and the organisation.

Within the 'public course' domain, it is important to match your areas of concern to the most appropriate content, as well as the group that will facilitate the best learning environment. For example, putting your receptionist in a training session with senior managers will impede the interaction and learning of both. When it comes to 'in-house' or customised training, you have the opportunity to shape your content and message in a way that is specific to your need. Again, these options should be reviewed with your training consultant / provider.

2) Will your staff be able to apply this training at work?

It is incredibly frustrating for a delegate to learn something new and exciting, only to return to work, ready to contribute in a meaningful way, and then being shut down. While it is unreasonable to expect that every employee be allowed to have free reign within the workplace, it is essential that business stimulates engagement by allowing employees to contribute.

I always encourage delegates to go back to work, after attending training, and sit with their line manager and discuss potential areas where they could apply their new skills. I also encourage HR practitioners and training managers to create awareness with those in supervisory and leadership positions to not only be prepared for these conversations, but to seek them out and encourage change.

3) Is the level of the training suited / matched to their competency?

This is particularly important when it comes to unit standard aligned programmes and courses that require the completion of a Portfolio of Evidence. As a leader in the training and HR / IR space, it is your responsibility to guide people towards success. The South African educational landscape, both past and present, means that we should expect numeracy and literacy issues. If a person is being trained in a language that is not their mother tongue, this will mean uptake of information will be slower.





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It is important that this is borne in mind, and support is given to the learners. Pre and post assessment of delegates is available to clients, and we encourage them to discuss their concerns with their training consultant / provider, and confirm that they are setting delegates up for success rather than failure.

I do not believe that the goal is purely transfer of knowledge, although this is critical. Learners should not only learn, but they should also develop a comfort with, and even a love for learning.

4) What support structures are available to the delegates / learners after training?

Research tells us that in order to improve and increase the efficiency of training, there should be more than one interaction with the material. Bearing in mind that it takes a while for a new idea to become an old idea, and an accepted and implemented idea. We should be increasing the interaction between delegate and information (and facilitator).

Coaching has proven to be very effective in this space. Within the soft skills space I advise my clients to set up what we call “touch base” or “accountability” sessions. These take the form of the facilitator getting delegates to set goals (in the session) as to how they will implement what they have learnt, and then sitting with the delegates two weeks or a month later and reviewing these plans. This serves as a check to review knowledge retention, but most importantly, it allows delegates the opportunity to report their successes, or seek support for their challenges. I recommend a minimum of three of these sessions, and I am always pleased to notice the change in behaviour that stems from the application of new skills and knowledge.

Within the IR space, this takes a more practical approach in terms of process and procedure development and support around the implementation thereof.

This kind of coaching:

- increases efficiency of training;
- drives meaningful and sustained behaviour change;
- leads to improved policies, procedure development and application;
- results in increased engagement and accountability;
- Improves your investment in training and development.

And that is future thinking, now.

Regards

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