

# Training Evaluations

In most organizations today, training is more than a simple introductory “how to” course. **The quality of training directly impacts a business in terms of sales volume, employee performance, production costs, and other bottom line metrics.**



The task of training an employee was once delegated almost completely to the appropriate manager. As businesses began to deal with increasingly complex processes, particularly those involving technology and audit-prone material, companies began to recognize the need for a separate and independent training / development entity.



Many companies now have separate departments or divisions dedicated to the task of training and developing new and existing employees. As with most departments, training departments are also measured for performance; in most cases, training and development is measured by a construct educators like to refer to as, "learning." Traditionally, learning organizations have measured their performance in terms such as:

- How many training courses have been taken thus far?
- How many learners completed the necessary certification courses?
- How many employees showed up for the session?
- How many employees scored over 75% on the assessment test?

These measurements indeed have validity – for the training and development department.

**However, they mean very little to C-level executives and VPs, who are primarily concerned with meeting monetary and fiscal targets.**

This white paper will reveal some best practices that training professionals use to effectively measure training evaluation objectives.

**The proper use of assessment tools and training evaluation surveys can integrate such learning metrics with real business measures that bring value to the company as a whole.**



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## **Training ROI**

As with assessing the value of any division of a company, one needs to measure objectives against the yardstick of the entire company. For example, the senior executives of the organization do not necessarily care about how well the learning organization is training its staff, how many of its employees had training this week, how many people completed courses in the last year, or how many achieved mastery. They do, however, care about the well-being of the company.

A common misconception in business is that the training and development departments exist solely to train the company's employees. The only justifiable reason for having a training department, however, is that it plays an active role in helping a company reach its bottom line or critical business goals.

Evaluating the value of training, then, must pertain directly to measurable performance and bottom-line numbers, rather than how well training sessions are being accepted by the employees.

Tom Kelly, then-vice president of, Internet Learning Solutions, pointed out at a panel discussion for Corporate University Week,

*“The most important thing any training department can do is to solve a business problem. The metrics of success [of a recent program] were about the business outcomes desired and had nothing to do with traditional training metrics such as number of students trained.”*

Now, while most training management would agree with how important solving a business problem is, very few ever put measurements in place to show how solving that business problem has added to the bottom line of the company.

## Measuring the Evaluation Metrics that Matter

A quality training evaluation system will take into account the factors that can be translated into actual value for a company. Furthermore, it should actively adhere to evaluation objectives that pertain to learning tenets. A commonly accepted model for effective training was developed in 1994 by Dr. Donald Kirkpatrick. It states that training should be evaluated at four critical levels:

### Level One – Reaction to Training

**How did the employee feel about the training session?** While this level does not prove any type of actual learning has taken place, a positive reaction is generally correlated with high levels of learning and results.

### Level Two – Classroom Learning

**How much information did the employee actually retain from the training session?**

This is learning at the most basic level and only assesses the semantic portions of the learning process. Nevertheless, it is necessary – especially for businesses that need employees to comply with certain procedures.

### Level Three – Transfer of Learning to Behavior

**How is the employee able to actually apply the learned knowledge in his or her day to day work?** Here is where learning begins to create actual value for the company.

### Level Four – Actual Business Results

**What critical business measures are showing actual change?** This is where company bottom line metrics are measured and observed for success / failure. When employee performance metrics meet that of training metrics, a program is considered successful. Sales training, for instance, can be measured by change in sales volume and length of sales cycle. Accordingly, safety training can be measured by the reduction in the number or severity of accidents.



**The first critical component of this evaluation system requires honest and complete feedback from the employees.** Since this is an element that is more subjective in nature, it requires a device that can elicit candid responses about the training process. **The best training material and the most advanced teaching techniques do not matter unless they are received positively by the employees.**

Training, in a sense, requires an element of motivation and coaching; only by creating excitement and purpose will an employee feel compelled to take what is learned beyond the classroom and create results. An electronic survey system is extremely effective in collecting honest feedback from a class. By routing appropriate feedback to the correct instructors and by protecting the anonymity of students, training managers can effectively gauge how well the classes are being received by the employees.

**The second component, learning results, can be assessed accurately using a survey system that can also conduct scored examinations.**

By linking learning (exam score history, etc.) to other feedback, valuable insights can be drawn about the effectiveness of the training program. For instance, if low test scores are consistently linked / correlated to that of one instructor in particular, it is probably a good idea to take a look at the feedback students are leaving about that instructor. The issue at hand may not be with the students at all in fact.

Having an electronic scoring system with result routing to the instructors is also very important in a business environment that handles sensitive processes (finance, compliance, etc.). It is imperative that remedial scores and poor learning results be brought to the knowledge of the instructors and managers as soon as possible. An effective system will automatically notify instructors of low scores and failures to meet standard learning requirements.

**The third component, which displays a transfer of learning into behavior in the workplace, can also make use of a quality survey system to assess effectiveness.**

Observation surveys, or behavioral scorecards, can be conducted at periodic time intervals after training takes place. These surveys, similar to the classroom feedback questionnaires, also need to elicit honest and candid feedback from the managers and coworkers in question. By doing so, direct assessment can be made of the transfer of learning.

**Finally, the business results bring viability of a training program's actual ROI into focus.**

To effectively gauge whether or not such business results can be tied into training (sales volume to sales training, for instance), the training evaluation system must have an actual database of historical feedback data and assessment results that can be used hand-in-hand with current business systems (such as your CRM or sales automation software).

**Quality training evaluation survey systems have a database that can be accessed bidirectionally using advanced application programming interfaces (APIs),** which help the systems speak to each other and uncover correlations.

## Leverage Quality Technology to Streamline Training and Assessment

Many companies can provide a range of services to assist with the implementation of a training evaluation program. Choosing the right supplier is crucial to ensuring that such an initiative is carried out with business value objectives in primary focus. The right supplier should not only provide the technology, but they should be able to provide full consultation to ensure that the evaluation system can integrate seamlessly with your company's own training objectives. A quality internal survey solution should be able to streamline the integration of many of the aforementioned best practices into your current business processes. Some things to look for:

- An actual **database** of training evaluation knowledge that dynamically serves as a central repository for all your data (test history, certification history)
- **Real-time email alerts** to notify instructors of outstanding or under-par assessment scores
- **Question scoring** to give variable weights to different assessment questions or evaluation dimensions
- An **easy to use interface** with a manageable learning curve for test administrators, trainees, training managers, and management
- Pre-survey consultation with real consultants and survey experts – not just software – that will ensure your deployment is on the right track



### About Cvent

Cvent delivers the commercial-grade survey software solutions and services that organizations and human resource departments need to cost-efficiently implement a comprehensive training evaluation program. Established in 1999, Cvent is the largest strategic meetings management and site selection company in the U.S., with over 400 employees worldwide. More than 10,000 professionals use Cvent per year to create over 100,000 internal and external surveys, events, and marketing campaigns. Cvent's users have sent over 175 million invitations and have processed over 5 million registrations and survey responses. Over \$20 million in research and development has been invested into Cvent's proven technology solution and services.

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