

TRAINING FOLLOW-UP AND MEASUREMENT



FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

The training program that ends at the meeting room door has achieved only half its potential. To ensure the full benefit of the training, you must take substantial steps as follow-up. The most effective steps are covered below under these headings:

- Post-meeting assignments
- Supplementary materials
- Follow-up training program
- Field coaching by sales managers

Post-meeting assignments

The purpose of sales training is to bring about changes in behavior in the field, on-the-job. An excellent way of making that happen is to give an on-the-job assignment or training exercise as follow-up to classroom training.

An on-the-job assignment is one that is necessary for job performance; a training exercise stands on its own. Lets suppose you have conducted a workshop on “developing the physician contact.” Afterwards, you could assign the trainees either of the following:

On-the-job assignment

Select 10 physicians who do not prescribe product X. Plan a development program for each. Carry out the plans and report progress and planned next steps to your manager.

Training exercise

Review your notes from the workshop. Summarize your plans for applying the principles to your territory. Give an example of one physician to whom your plans would apply.

On-the-job assignments produce far more behavior change than training exercises. Use them whenever you can to heighten the impact of your program.

Normally you will need line management approval before giving an on-the-job assignment. You usually will have no trouble getting line approval for such an assignment because the assignment is what management wants done anyway.

Supplementary materials

You can gain additional training effect by sending out appropriate materials after the training. It not only adds information, it serves as a general reminder of the workshop and its on-the-job applications.

Sometimes you'll come across a new explanation or example that relates to the workshop. This could be a news item, or an industry report, or a company release. Enclose a short paragraph reminding everyone of the workshop and referring him or her to the attachment.

You may also have reports from the training program to disseminate. In a typical example, you may have had the trainees prepare FAB analyses of each product. After the training, you can edit these, write them up, get them approved by product management, and then send to the field. These analyses are a good reminder of the training and carry extra impact because they are the trainee's own work.

Simple reminders often are a help in extending the reach of training. There are many sources of these reminders. After a program, for example, you will probably here examples of field applications. Report them to the sales force as reminders of the training.

Follow-up training program

After any training program, keep tuned in to field progress. The need for a follow-up training program is always a possibility.

You may find that a training program did not achieve all of its objectives. If so, you should determine the reason and consider a remedial program – one that fills in the gaps or extends the content. The remedial program may be much briefer than the original one. For example, you may have conducted a full-day program on probing and listening. You may find that a two-hour follow-up on the web or at cycle meetings will generate the full results desired.

Be alert for similar opportunities for advanced programs that build on past successful workshops. There is always an opportunity to increase the sales force's effectiveness by upgrading existing skills. If you've had a success with a program on basic selling skills, consider offering an advanced selling skills course.

Field coaching by sales managers

When sales managers follow-up a training program, the results are dramatic and effective as compared to no follow-up. The absolute minimum you should work to achieve is support for the program. The ideal is active coaching on the content of the program.

A good needs analysis should help develop support for the program. Thus, you can expect follow-up if you have done a good job of planning.

You greatly enhance the support you will receive if you make the extra effort to communicate details of the content of the program to line managers. One good method is to conduct an abbreviated version of the sales representative's program for the managers. Another is to use sales managers on a rotating basis as guest trainers for your training program.

Training you sales managers in how to coach is the best approach of all. This training is always welcome and it is effective in getting results. A good management development program is an efficient means of coaching training.

MEASUREMENT OF TRAINING

Purposes

Probably no activity should be undertaken without giving thought to measuring its results. Certainly, training should be measured, and the training manager should be leading the effort. That does not imply that we have a simple, precise, unchallengeable method of putting a value on training. We do not. But we should apply what measures we can for at least four purposes.

- To diagnose the effectiveness of a program
- To determine future training needs
- To establish the cost of training
- To justify training

Diagnosing effectiveness. Once people have attended a program, it is logical for management to wonder if the program accomplished what it set out to do. The training manager should have a ready answer to this question. This is a good time to go back to the program's objectives and make sure that you have some indicators of having achieved them.

If you have topic and course objectives, you should have in-class data showing that the subject matter was learned. If you have end-result objectives, you should be looking in the field for indications of success.

If you have fallen short of any objective, the best reaction is to modify the program to correct the deficiency. There is no reason to keep this a secret – it is normal practice to upgrade a training program based on results. The modifications are usually in the program design, in time allocations, and in methods of delivery. Obviously, these modifications are best made before a second group has gone through the program.

Future needs. What new training should be undertaken is a constant question for the training manager. Examining the results of completed training provides some guide. How has the most recent training been received? What is working in the field? What gaps are there in the full achievement of results? Answers to these questions point new training programs. You should be able to get guidance as to topics, level of difficulty, and scheduling.

Cost of training. The training manager should be able to pinpoint the cost of training in detail. Generally, there are direct and indirect costs – direct being those costs the training manager controls, like visual aids, meals, and instructors' salaries. Indirect costs include trainees' time while in training, generally not controllable by the training manager.

Sometimes overhead or administrative expense is added to a training cost center, perhaps for responsibilities other than training. These amounts should be removed from training measurements if possible as they distort the figures.

Training justification. No function is immune from budgetary trimming. It is best to have valid data available to show the results of training efforts in order to prevent unwarranted reductions. Justification is best when undertaken as a positive, proactive effort; thus, each report of training should contain a statement of results achieved.

Methods of gathering data

There are five ways to gather data for your evaluation efforts:

- Trainees' comment sheets

- On line and/or paper and pencil tests
- Supervisors' reports (including performance appraisal)
- Trainer's observation
- Examining field results

Trainees' comments. At the conclusion of a program, it is helpful to ask the trainees for their reaction. There is an obvious limitation to this: the trainees are not always able to determine if they have personally learned anything.

However, there is some positive effect of asking them their opinion, and their reaction to the program will assist you in redesign, if necessary.

Comment sheets usually ask for opinions of the program and its applications. It is usually a good idea to solicit opinions regarding possible future programs. Some suggested comment sheets are included as exhibits in this paper.

On line and/or paper and pencil tests. These are often helpful in product knowledge or technical subjects like physiology where a significant grounding in information must precede any applications or skills.

Tests are most useful when given often, so that both instructor and student can get feedback on what has been learned and what hasn't in time for remedial training. A single test given at the end of a training unit is pure measurement – the training value has passed.

When testing, there are a variety of questions that can be posed. The easiest to answer, and the least valuable is multiple choice. Harder to answer and more valuable as a training aid are questions requiring sentence completion or short, composed answers. Hardest of all, the best training, but the most time consuming to grade are essay questions.

Examples of all these questions are given in the sample quiz sample.

Supervisors' Reports. After training, supervisors should be contacted for their feedback on the training. It is best to structure this feedback by asking a few general questions, for example:

How has the sales representative's performance changed since the training?

What differences do you see in the sales representative's handling of objections (benefits, etc.)?

In what ways do you think the training has helped the sales representative's performance?

Performance appraisals are a useful indicator of performance and, therefore, of training needs. If you cannot inspect the actual appraisals, you may be able to have a summary of needs or development plans made. This will serve the same purpose.

Trainer's observations. No program should be considered complete until the training manager has made field observations of the training population.

The ideal method of making the observations is by riding with selected sales representatives for a day each. In the course of the day, you will have ample opportunity to determine the trainee's opinion of the course and its results. You will also be able to see for yourself if the trainee is able to do the things that were taught in your course.

These observations constitute a needs analysis of sorts, because your observations should result in recommendations for follow-up training. You should also use your observations as a guide to revising future offerings of the course.

Field results. You should examine sales reports whenever you can. They will show what the sales force is actually accomplishing. Although solely training does not influence sales results, there should be improvements in results related to training subjects. For example, if you have run training in hospital development, there should be improvement in hospital sales. If you have trained all new people, there should be some change evident in the results new people achieve.

Presenting your data

Your data should be presented honestly, but with some thought to its interpretation. Generally, you will want to show the data in two ways: Absolute measures and comparisons.

Cost per trainee. This is a fundamental absolute measure of training activity. You should be able to show for every program what it costs to provide training for each person. Normally, it is useful to break the cost down into its three components: Salary, travel and living, tuition.

This, of course, doesn't show whether training is good or bad. But there generally is a management perception that training is valuable and its cost is necessary.

Total cost of program. You should be able to show for each program and for the department what the total cost is. For this measure, it is usually not necessary to trainees' salaries unless they are actually assigned to your department during a training period. You should be able to break the total down into tuition and travel/living, expense.

This also doesn't provide a simple value judgment; it does provide a concrete figure to use in weighing the felt value of results.

Comparisons. Anything you can compare costs to will aid in making a judgment. Look for opportunities to make comparisons that show the value of your programs.

Actual versus budget is a good indication of how well you are managing the resources put at your disposal. If management has approved a budget for your activities, that is an indication of worth they put in your program. When you produce the program for the allotted money, and then you have achieved success in that respect.

Productivity versus cost is a powerful comparison. If you can show that some field result has resulted from training; you may be able to put a value on the field result. For example, if you provided training in presenting a new product, and both trainee and management feedback acknowledges that the training was a factor in a successful introduction, then the value of the introduction is in part due to the investment in training.

Current cost versus past cost is a useful aid to measuring training effectiveness. If for example, it used to cost \$8,000 to train a new employee and now it cost \$6,000, the training is more efficient now.

Trained versus untrained performance may be a useful indicator. If you have trained one group but not another, it's a good idea to look for differences in productivity between them. Those differences may show up in sales, performance appraisals, in turnover, or in some other way.

MEETING EVALUATION AND COMMENTS

	Exc.				Poor
	1	2	3	4	5
My overall rating of the meeting is					

The most useful part of the meeting was: _____

The least useful part was: _____

I plan to use the following on the job: _____

My suggestions for future meetings: _____

SELLING SKILLS MEETING EVALUATION AND COMMENTS

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Rating</u>				
	Exc.				Poor
1. Pre-call Planning Comments:	1	2	3	4	5
2. Probing Comments:	1	2	3	4	5
3. Opening the call Comments:	1	2	3	4	5
4. Features, advantages, benefits Comments:	1	2	3	4	5
5. Handling objections/obstacles Comments:	1	2	3	4	5
6. Closing Comments:	1	2	3	4	5



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