



Should Businesses Forget about Learning and Focus on Organizational Performance?

Description

As we try to come to terms with the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, how we measure the performance of our organizations has never been more important. I wanted to share what we have been doing at Kirkpatrick to address the performance issue.

The New Kirkpatrick Model has turned my dad, Don Kirkpatrick's, original four levels upside down. For over 50 years, learning practitioners began with Level 1, "Reaction," and Level 2, "Learning." They overwhelmingly got so bogged down with smile sheets and knowledge testing that they rarely reached the more powerful Level 3, "Behavior," and Level 4, "Results."

THE KIRKPATRICK MODEL

Level 4: Results

The degree to which targeted program outcomes contribute to the organization's highest-level result

Level 3: Behavior

The degree to which participants apply what they learned from training when they are back on the job

Level 2: Learning

The degree to which participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills, attitude, confidence and commitment based on their participation in the training

Level 1: Reaction

The degree to which participants find the training enjoyable, engaging and relevant to their jobs

© 2010-2019 Kirkpatrick Partners, LLC. All rights reserved. Used with permission. Visit kirkpatrickpartners.com

Practitioners of the New Kirkpatrick Model now begin with the end in mind, by first conducting a business needs analysis with stakeholders. Note that we do not call it a "training needs" analysis. It is followed by a performance needs analysis with line managers to determine what must occur in the workplace in order to bring about significant value.

Only then do we consider what needs to be learned, if anything, to generate the desired performance and subsequent results. In short, the focus now should be on-the-job performance and organizational results. The pathway there is through business partnerships, and it more closely aligns training to corporate strategy.

Integrating Learning into the Workflow with Technology

With this said, you might expect my response to whether or not we should forget about learning and focus on performance to be, "Well, obviously!" Actually, my answer is "Certainly not." However, we do need to approach the concept of learning in a different manner, and technology can help.

There will always be a place for formal learning. It has been, is, and always will be the cornerstone for performance and results, but alone it yields inadequate levels of both. Learning must be integrated into the on-the-job environment and not viewed as separate or discrete.

Here are some tactics for integrating learning into the workflow:

- Talk with line managers to find out their performance needs then develop performance-based tools to help.
- Create and disseminate “mini performance boosts.” These are strategic forms of microlearning, consisting of short video, audio, or written job aids designed to improve a specific performance issue.
- Create a virtual post-training community of practice for mission-critical initiatives.
- Automate reminders to hold weekly performance-improvement-based touch bases between training graduates and their instructors and/or supervisors.
- Establish a virtual coaching program.
- Convert formal training into OnDemand resources accessible in the work environment.

Moving learning into the workplace will make training investments more impactful and move you into the role of a business performance partner. This will make all the difference for your organization, your training function, and you as a training professional. As [Andy Perkins](#) of Kaplan writes about the current COVID-19 crisis and its implications for business: “It is those businesses with the ability to learn and apply these skills in the workplace—identifying opportunities, developing new skill sets, applying new knowledge, and solving problems—that will come through this terrible period with renewed purpose and vigor.”

Ready to see how you can meet your organization’s learning and development needs? [Learn more](#) about the unique digital learning environment of [Kaplan Performance Academy](#).

Date Created

April 2020

Author

katy-leedom