

Training does not work.....Facilitation & Coaching delivers a +ROI

'Training' is a pretty poor process for influencing people to adjust to a change in behaviour in the long term. Unless a training event is very precisely designed to meet a shared need amongst a group of attendees, it is unlikely to be successful in driving significant change and improvement. Trainers avoid discussing ROI. Many don't even bother to use the elementary 'levels of evaluation' developed by Kirkpatrick many years ago or any other acknowledged system.

Memory & the Psychology of Learning

The average person forgets 98% of what they have learned within 48 hours, unless some form of review of material is undertaken. So the implications for recall, understanding and application can be poor unless other mechanisms compensate to retain the understanding and the learning.

The typical training event focuses on transferring information to others. Information transfer is a poor criterion to view as positive and tangible ROI. Training should be a participative process - often it is not. The higher the degree of participation the better, as long as learning methods focus on reviewing and summarising learning.

The average person has an attention span of 10-15 minutes. It is an inconvenient truth that not everyone in the group will be at the same level of learning – some will be on the curve – others will be stimulated or distracted by their own thinking or things going on in the room. So at any point in a training event, various delegates will be off the learning curve and the Trainer will not have the capacity or the attention, nor even the sensory acuity to be aware of everyone.

At best, Training provides the ability to deliver lots of information quickly.

At what level of individual or collective Learning is Training focused?

Using taxonomy of learning levels we can ask at what level is training geared? I think that most of the time training addresses the lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy of learning. Basic recall of information, understanding and application is as far as most training delivers. The higher levels where we see personal change really taking place at analysis, synthesis and evaluation, is rarely achieved.

The 'ASK Pattern'

Training tends to address knowledge rather than the skills and attitude of the ASK pattern. Very few people will change their attitude as the result of attending a training module – however lengthy. Attitude change can be very rapid – but usually requires a process of trial and error thinking in order for attitude change to take place.

Only the most advanced training programs, with very precisely defined processes, can shock or stimulate a person to change their attitude. Of course, these programs do exist but as a percentage of the average

course on team building, leadership communication etc there will be very rarely that shock or stimulate to such an extent to bring about change.

It is difficult to guarantee everyone learning, that training or learning event, without considerable testing for understanding, summarising and reviewing the major learning points. So you would think that Training would be replaced by other methods of behaviour transfer!

In bringing about organisational change, training is a very poor substitute for real change which is best achieved by focused attention, coaching people and teams through a proven process to capture learning and install best practise.

Focused Facilitation & Coaching

However, Facilitation and Coaching does have a much higher 'hit rate' in terms of learning. Facilitators often take more cognisance of a learner's individual style, whereas a trainer has information to convey to a larger group who may have a shared interest to learn but little account may be taken of differing learning styles.

Further, Trainers may not be aware of Learning Styles of others and prefer, or through default thinking, deliver in the style with which they are most comfortable – their own style!

Learner Centred Facilitation

Structured facilitation focuses on the core behaviours and actions that an individual is comfortable to practise. With practise comes perfection. Facilitation and gentle coaching and motivation enable the learner, whether they be staff member or manager, to move from relative awkwardness and lack of competence, to a competence that can be integrated into the unconscious level.

Practise for Mastery

It is like driving a car or playing a musical instrument or enjoying a sport. When you have practised the 'art and science' of whatever is your pleasure – then it becomes automatic and integrated in you.

Training often does not give the opportunity to practise for mastery. Structured Facilitation and Coaching does have that facility, and mastery need not take long to develop. In many of our events on Leadership we incorporated a 'juggling competition' where everyone attending had to develop a degree of juggling. On every occasion we used those juggling balls – everyone learned to juggle. Some were still rusty but they knew that with practise and encouragement it was very easy to improve performance.

Influence & Presentation Facilitation

I work all the time 1:1 and in small groups and action learning sets to support people in achieving a comfortable degree of competence in public speaking. It really is the No. 1 fear for many. Yet working with people who experience public speaking at the 'phobic level' of fear, it is clearly possible to turn their ability to deliver from 90/100 on the fear scale to something approaching single figures.

This could never be achieved through a structured training input unless group size was very small.

Although I have provided training events since the time I set up a quality improvement business, I have always believed that training is limited in development and have always opted for 'one on one' facilitation either with individuals or teams.

Best Practise in Facilitation

My understanding is that change is brought about by small group activity which is tailored and focused upon changing behaviour. "Until behaviour changes, nothing changes". So my focus is looking upon those activities that people need to display more effectively in their work, and develop their ability until they have mastered the process. You cannot achieve that in a training room with 12-15 people in attendance. You certainly cannot achieve it in a large auditorium where many are attending, and where there are competing motivations, interests and distraction.

ROI: Manage the Learning Environment

To create and sustain a positive flow of ROI (Return on Investment) in development, one has to focus on diagnosing the issues which are stopping things working the way they should. This can only be achieved by a thorough investigation of all the components of the problem and then defining how to resolve any problem through solution centred tactics. This means working one on one with others.

Evidence that Facilitation & Coaching Provide ROI

Generally they do this with change programmes focused on changes in attitude and core values and behaviours. Facilitation & Coaching can provide instant impact. Right from the start the facilitator should know what is and what is not working for their clients. ROI is instantly assessed through the simple act of assessing three things:

1. As a results of the facilitation or Coaching – what behaviours has the client curtailed which were holding them back?
2. What have they identified as being current positive behaviours and they have committed to continue to practise and master.
3. What new behaviours has the client identified which will progress them towards their goal should they commit to apply these in their normal behaviours.

This tripartite commitment is what gives Facilitation and Coaching a strong ROI.

The Recession & Training

Organisations really have to consider what training they will commit to in these difficult times, and what training is mandatory for their people. Also the cost of training in terms of ROI is often not assessed. What is the cost of delegates not being at work?

What impact on the learning will there be if a course designed for 12 is attended by smaller numbers – how does this effect the effectiveness of the learning design? What are the costs associated with re-running the event – paying the trainer for rework and restaging the event and how is 'business as usual' conducted with so many people away from the organisation.

And how will work which is uncompleted because of the event be completed when the trainees return to work? Most organisations do not have spare capacity to cover for course attendance by others.

Training & Cost Effective ROI

Cases where Training is cost effective and provides a high level of ROI is when Training in conveying basic information which is instantly transferred. For instance, responding to 'in bound' calls in Call Centres where options are simple to understand or using a piece of simple technology such as a mobile phone. Where information is simple to understand large groups can go through training courses very quickly and their needs can be satisfied very quickly.

Mass Baptism, Sheep Dips & Big Training Events

Unfortunately, I have witnessed what I call 'mass baptisms or sheep dips' when staff are brought together in conference surroundings and a 'Guru' is present firing off his or her message to all and sundry for an hour or more. They can be very impressive, but what impact does that transfer of information have on organisational functioning. Groups of consultants often provide this training 'baptising' mass audiences of 250 people and can get through a moderate sized business in less than a day. It's a great way to get people talking about things and stimulates excitement but does it change anything?

Summary

Simply stated, Facilitation & Coaching can be honed to achieve very precise changes in behaviour. Until behaviour changes nothing changes in organisations – whether it be leadership, customer focus, matrix management or conflict management etc. Consider the benefits to your organisation of adapting a radical facilitation or Coaching intervention to replace some of the training. As a pilot it is very easy and possible to demonstrate the benefits that can accrue to your enterprise.

Short focused inputs working closely with key staff in your business could instantly impact your performance as an organisation. Using Impact Studies we can create significant improvement in a short period of time without burdening the organisation with a commitment to have large off site meetings, Hotel accommodation and numerous logistic issues to cover for staff attending programmes 'off site'.

Facilitation means 'to make easy' and that's what organisations should be committing to install and implement the changes that will equip them to operate at a higher level of functioning and performance.

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