

Improving the Return on Investment of the Training That Your Employees Attend

As a leader you have a major role in reinforcing the training your people attend. According to research if you demonstrate active support (see below), training will improve performance 90 percent of the time. Passive support will result in about a 50 percent transfer rate. No support or negative support adds obstacles to employees' efforts to apply what they learned.

Increasing your return on training doesn't need to take a lot of time or effort. A brief meeting before and after the training can increase employee focus, learning, and results. We've attached some sample agendas and strategies to get you started. The benefits to you: improved performance, a stronger bench, and ultimately more time to devote to your own priorities. That's a pretty good ROI for you, too. Below are some of the ways that you can help learning take hold on the job.

Discussions before and after the training

Have discussions with employees both before and after the training to discuss the what's being covered in the training and how it relates to your employees' performance goals. Ridge Training's "Briefing and Goal-Setting Agenda" worksheets, available in the Articles section of our web site (www.ridge.com) can help guide you through these discussions.

Follow up on the action plan

Ask to see the action plan created in the training or have employees create one if needed. Check in regularly to monitor progress and help the employees through blocks to application/integration.

Link the learning goals to performance metrics

Whenever possible, show the employees how what they learned will help them be more successful in achieving their goals or meeting success factor standards.

Create a line of sight between business goals/initiatives and learning goals

Help employees see how what they learned can be applied more broadly in their jobs. Where else could what they learned be used? How do the concepts or skills support upcoming initiatives? The more dots they connect, the more valuable their new knowledge becomes.

Create opportunities for group coaching

If you have several employees who have taken the course, encourage them to meet and learn from their successes and mistakes.

Be a model

If you are attending the training, be aware that people will follow your example. If they see you applying the concepts or skills you learned, they're more likely to do so. If you don't, they won't.

Be a coach yourself

If you know the skills or concepts that were taught, look for ways to reinforce them on the job. Missed opportunities are often as instructive as upcoming opportunities.

The following agenda can help managers discuss the training that their employees attend, and help tie the training to performance goals.

Open

- “Let’s talk about how to get the best return on our investment of your attending this training.”
- “I’d like to discuss:
 - the content of the program,
 - how it relates to your performance goals and why it’s important, and
 - how we can cover your work load while you’re attending the training.”

Content, Goals and Coverage

Content of the Program

- “What’s your understanding of what this training covers?”

Performance Goals

- Be clear about the hidden message implicit in going to training. “I’m asking all my reports to attend this program” or “This is a development area we have discussed.” (Or if you haven’t discussed it, do so now.)
- “What do you hope to do more effectively as a result of attending the program?”
- Share your expectations of what you hope the employee will gain from the program.
- “Here’s why these skills are important... and here’s how they tie to your performance expectations...”
- “What questions or concerns do you have?”

Logistics and Coverage

- “It’s important that you aren’t distracted by your workload during the program. Tell me what needs to happen so that you can give the program your full attention.”
- Problem solve.

Closure and Follow Up

- Summarize next actions.
- “Thank you for the investment you’re making to attend the training and learn these skills.”
- Set a date for checking in after the training.

The following agenda can help managers discuss the training that their employees attend, and help tie the training to performance goals.

Open

- I'm really interested to hear what you thought of the training and how you can use it."
- "I'd like to:
 - hear about your experiences in the course,
 - make an action plan for how you can integrate what you found most useful, and
 - plan how we can follow it up."

Debriefing, Action Plan, Next Steps

Debriefing

- "What was most valuable? Anything else?"
- "Anything that was not useful?" (This is important so they can get beyond it.)
- "Anything else you want to tell me about the program?"
- "How and when can you see yourself using the skills you learned?"
- "With whom can you see yourself using the skills you learned?"

Make an Action Plan

- Invite the employee to plan how and when he/she could apply the skills.

Next Steps

- Invite the employee to identify the earliest opportunity for applying the skills, and to talk specifically about how he/she will do that.
- Plan a time to check in with the employee after this opportunity.

Closure and Follow Up

- Summarize as needed
- "Thanks again for the time and energy you're devoting to learning these new skills."
- "I look forward to hearing how things go."