

Are Your Training Goals in Alignment? Four Keys

Be sure you connect your training with your overall goals.

By Cordell Riley

There are two types of training. The first teaches employees to perform the tasks required by their jobs. The second type does that too, but produces far more transformational results, because it also teaches skills and behaviors that align with organizational goals.

To illustrate this point, envision a golf caddy as a trainer. That caddy can hand the golfer one club at a time and say, “Here’s the best club for this shot.” That might improve the golfer’s game. But what if the caddy added a higher level of information by giving perspective on the overall layout of the hole, the potential hazards in the path, and even a strategy for playing the entire course?

Given the choice, of course you prefer the bigger picture. But how do you do that in planning your organization’s training process? Here are four important steps to take.

“Measure people’s behavior before and after training.”

1. Define & Keep Your Most Important Goals in Mind

Are you striving to create an organization known for delivering superlative customer satisfaction? That’s a great goal, but reaching it means defining specifics that can get you there — what you want your training to achieve.

For example, you train your phone reps to resolve 90% of all complaints during people’s first calls. Or you could focus on training those reps to deliver the kind of care that gets 90% of callers to report that they’re “extremely satisfied” on post-call surveys. When you define goals, you can design training that achieves them.

Another way of stating this principle: Begin with the end in mind. That means understanding the bigger vision of what you want your organization to become, then defining specific training steps that can get you there.

2. Break Down Silo Walls

Trainers are often brought into different organizational sectors and encouraged to stay in them. They might teach only computer skills or customer service, for instance. But what if your trainers thought outside the silos and delivered



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valuable things that resulted in improvements across your entire organization?

One way to reach this objective is to initiate discussions between your trainers and the people who create marketing, oversee your online presence, and so on. Invite trainers to talk to people from many different areas of your organization. The more such input trainers receive, the better they'll be at making the training encompassing and effective.

3. Don't Create Training in a Vacuum

Whether your training team works in-house or you use outside trainers, make sure to engage them in conversations about organizational collateral. Ask them to peruse relevant publications, news stories about your organization, press releases, and any other pertinent documents you can provide.

Then ask the question: Do those materials suggest any untapped opportunities to align your training specifics with larger trends, goals, and initiatives?

4. Tie Your Training to Measurable Metrics

It's essential to develop a set of clear metrics to measure people's behavior before and after training. It's the only way to understand what your training has accomplished and how much closer you are to meeting your goals.

Here are some suggestions for developing metrics that don't just gather data but reveal deeper progress:

If your vision is to become a leader in customer service and retention, you can survey customers before and after your employees have gone through the training program. You should ask customers about their overall satisfaction, the likelihood they'll recommend you to other customers, and similar factors.

If you want to gain maximum value from a limited-time offer and provide training to support that objective, your goal could be a certain percentage of improvement among employees who took the training. Measure and report on those results after the training has been delivered.

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Beyond the Training Track

Available at NonprofitWorld.org, these articles provide more perspectives on education and training for you and your staff:

How to Present Training Workshops that Educate and Inspire (Vol. 29, No. 4)

Using Training Strategically to Build Organizational Capacity (Vol. 14, No. 4)

Why Feedback Is the Key to Your Success (Vol. 35, No. 3)

Board Problems Reflected in Training Requests (Vol. 33, No. 1)

Motivate Your Workers with Training Opportunities (Vol. 33, No. 3)

Measuring Outcomes in the Real World (Vol. 30, No. 6)

Training Programs Need More than Good Information (Vol. 21, No. 2)

Bring Your Training Home (Vol. 37, No. 4)

If you're implementing HR training in an effort to increase employee retention, you can measure retention rates before and after training and survey employees on metrics like, "I see a clear career path if I remain employed here."

Once you are measuring, you can tweak, modify your training, and find ways to improve results. But one thing is for certain: If you don't measure and adjust, your training will never deliver the results it could.

In Conclusion . . .

If you ask a group of leaders and managers to define what training is, chances are that most of them will say something like, "Training is a process that teaches people the skills they need to do their jobs better."

Of course, that's true. But what if you ask a series of deeper questions like, "Wouldn't you like your training to build a workforce that builds your brand . . . helps your organization achieve its mission . . . and communicates what you stand for to the world?" Most will reply, "Yes, we would!"

As you launch new training initiatives or refine those you already have, keep those larger issues in mind. The better you can align training with your overall goals, the more successful you can become. 

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