

Proving Learning Value: C-Suite Engagement

So far in this article series, we've discussed the basics of designing effective training; when to use formative versus summative assessments; and whether your key stakeholders are more reactive or strategic in their approach to training initiatives. But did you know that the overall perceived value learning has in your organization also affects your training's effectiveness?

Often, the best performing organizations consider their employees to be their most important asset. This also means Learning & Development (L&D) has been elevated to the top of the priorities list. In these companies, you'll find that the L&D team has advanced to a more strategic stage in [Paul Kearns' Learning Maturity Model](#). They are given a seat at the C-Suite table and are consulted early along with the other business units when new initiatives are planned.

Yet even in the earliest stages of the maturity model, it's possible to begin the process of proving learning value of your Learning & Development (L&D) team as it relates to your company's other functional areas and within the enterprise. Start with incremental, achievable steps and your efforts towards making your team a true business partner with others across the organization will soon pay off. Begin with the following:

1. Be proactive in recognizing yourself and your team as strategic enablers, not as support staff. Walk the walk and talk the talk, and others will begin to see this in you as well.
2. Understand the overall goals and operations of the company at a detailed level. Read annual reports and CEO messages, gather as much information on the other aspects of the business to the same degree you know your L&D area.
3. Understand business unit goals and how L&D can support them by allying with business unit managers and including yourself in business unit meetings.
4. Use your training needs analysis, and the gap information derived from the analysis, to plan the training, learning objectives, and any formative and summative assessments.
5. Prioritize, create and implement your training interventions according to those goals and objectives. Build content and programs that drive behavior changes that ensure the intended results and create new business opportunities.
6. Actively participate and contribute to program reviews, assessments and lessons learned discussions. Ensure L&D is involved and adds value to other Human Resource or employee performance tasks, such as the hiring and appraisal process. Track progress with the Kearns' approach or an alternative method that works best for you.

If you want an easier way to provide reasonable metrics without going down the endless path of measure, measure, measure (sometimes forgetting why we are measuring), don't be afraid to simplify. Consider the following, borrowed from the [New World Kirkpatrick Model](#):

1. **Did the learners like the training?**
Determine whether or not learners feel engaged in the learning experience. Ask, too, if learners considered the training relevant to their jobs. When time and resources are properly invested to create engaging learning, a basic smile sheet can be the ideal assessment instrument and tool for the learner to express their satisfaction.

2. **Did the learners learn the content?**

Identify method(s) will you use to prove learning took place. Something as simple as a pre-test to determine the level of learners' knowledge before they took the training, then a post-test afterward is all that's needed to demonstrate a change. **Learner Certainty Assessments** can also be used to measure learners' certainty in what they've learned and provide both administrators and learners insightful information typically not captured during training.



3. **Can learners perform the trained tasks on the job?**

Set up preplanned support mechanisms with managers, work alignment processes, job aids, and online to ensure learners can perform once the intervention is over. Remember to ask line managers give you metrics obtained prior to the training and then design your learning objectives, modules and formative assessments in alignment to those metrics. When you do, post-intervention performance ratings and appraisals should easily demonstrate learners can perform on the job, and you should see metrics improvements as well.

4. **Did the learning intervention affect the bottom line?**

Evaluate the goal of the training within the confines of corporate revenues, risk reduction and cost reduction. There should be published metrics on each of these areas that clearly demonstrate impact on the business metrics. Compare these with how thoroughly the training was constructed to support those goals and to the availability of support mechanisms in place to ensure success after the interventions. This will allow you to demonstrate positive change.

For example, if you can demonstrate that the learning intervention reduced help desk calls by a significant percentage, you can show that percentage in reduction of cost.

With the right focus, effort and consistency, you can make learning and development and your L&D team strategic to your business and prove it's a direct source of value.

Do you have tips and strategies that work well for you? Please join the conversation in the comments section of this article or feel free to [send us an email](#).