

**ASTD 2007 International Conference and
Exposition
Atlanta, GA**

Session #SU 401

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**Training Impact
Evaluation That Senior
Managers Believe and Use:
The Success Case Method**

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Learning Objectives

- Apply the five-step Success Case method to tell training's story in your own organization
- Avoid the pitfalls of the traditional ROI and impact evaluation models
- Critically analyze actual case examples

Observing and Debriefing the Furniture Company Skit

1) Which Training Director gave the best response?

2) What made the best response most persuasive?

3) What “business” was each Training Director in?

TD#1 _____

TD#2 _____

TD#3 _____

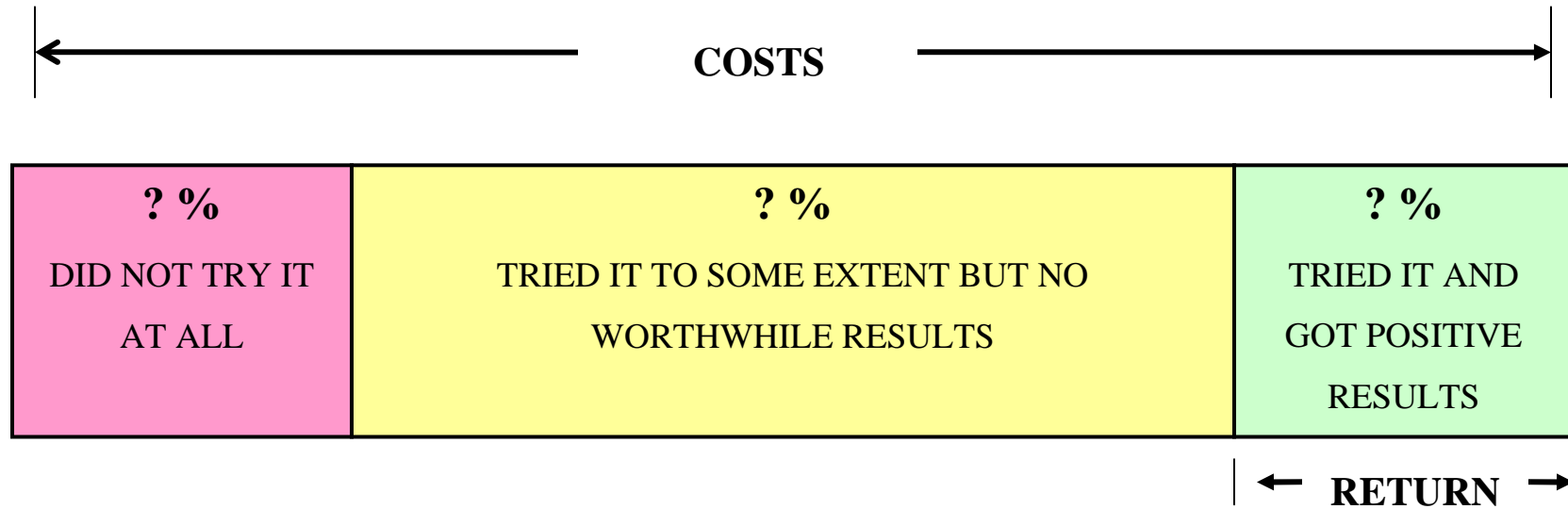
Other notes. . .

Training Impact Estimation Worksheet

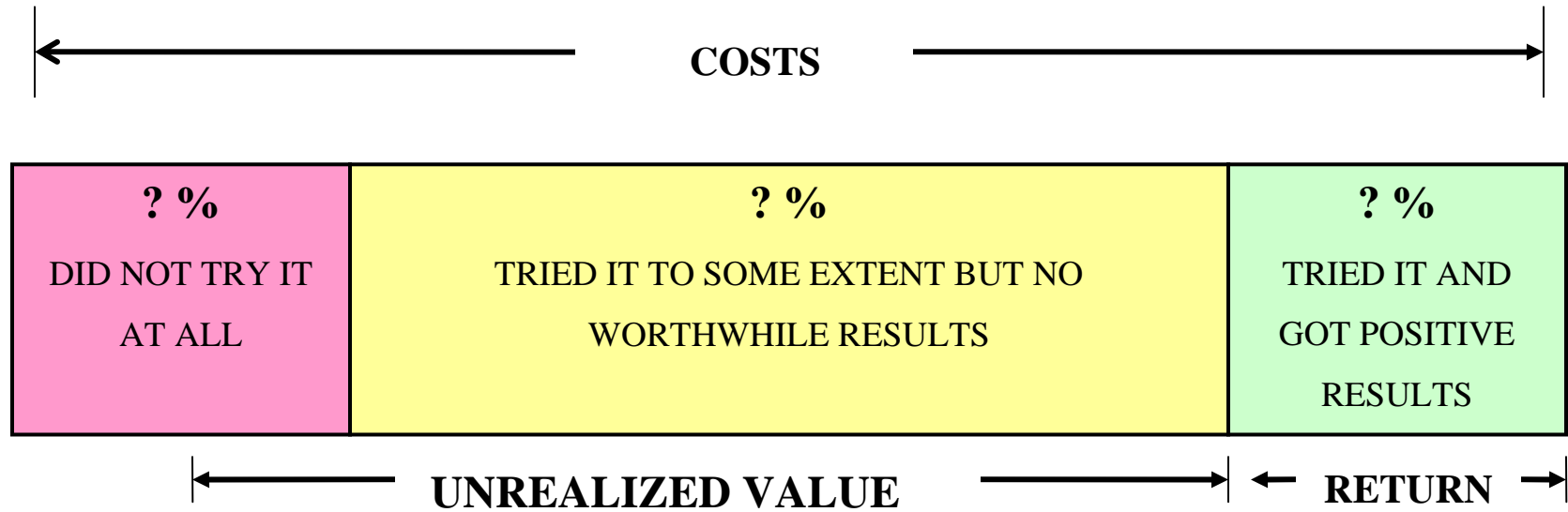
Of 1000 people who attended a “Supervisory Skills” workshop, after returning to the work place, what proportion:

<i>Nature of Application</i>	Did not try it at all?	Tried it, had trouble or it didn't work, so gave up and went back to old behaviors?	Used it and achieved a concrete result that (a) Is worthwhile to the business, and (b) they could document with evidence?
<i>Percentage Estimate</i>			

Predictable Training Impact Distribution



Unrealized value: A new metric

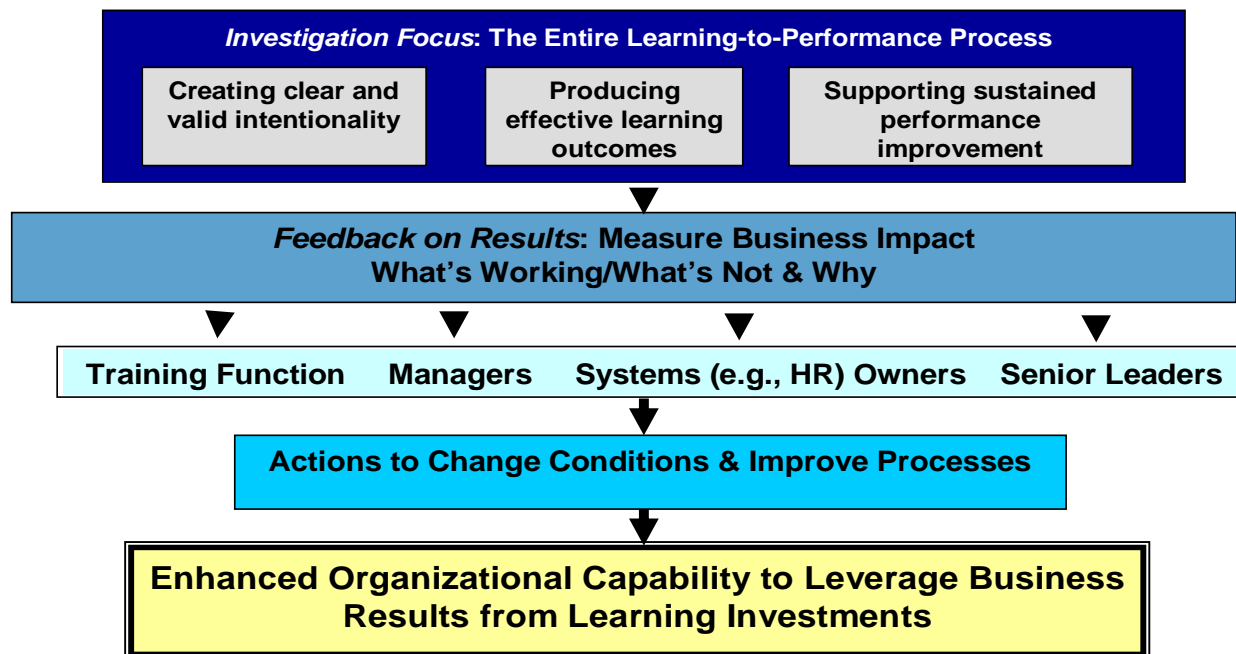


Training Failure Mode Analysis Estimate

In cases where training did NOT contribute to business impact, to what extent (percentage estimate) does each of the following failure reasons explain the real causes for a lack of impact?

<i>Failure Reason</i>	PREPARATION & READINESS	LEARNING INTERVENTION	APPLICATION ENVIRONMENT
<i>Percentage Estimate</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ lack of senior management alignment and commitment ○ Wrong people attended ○ No clear reason for attending ○ Lack of preparation and focus ○ Didn't need it; already used it ○ Etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Could not learn it ○ Wanted to learn it, but instruction failed ○ Bad training design or materials ○ Facilitator did bad job ○ Etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Didn't get any manager support ○ Had no opportunity to try it out ○ Lack of peer support ○ No incentive to use it ○ Lack of feedback and coaching ○ Etc.

Evaluation Strategy

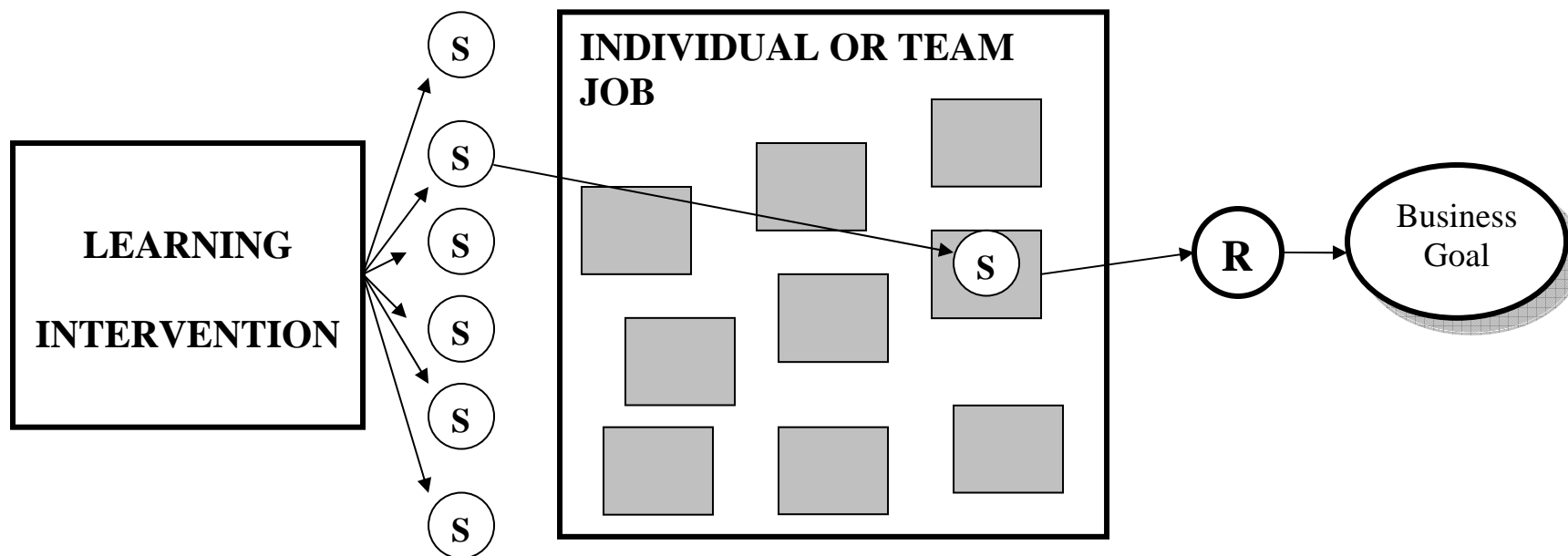


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The Anatomy of Training Impact (When training works, what happens?)



Impact occurs when:

A training-acquired skill [S] is applied to improve performance in some part of a job  that produces a Result [R] that contributes to a Business Goal

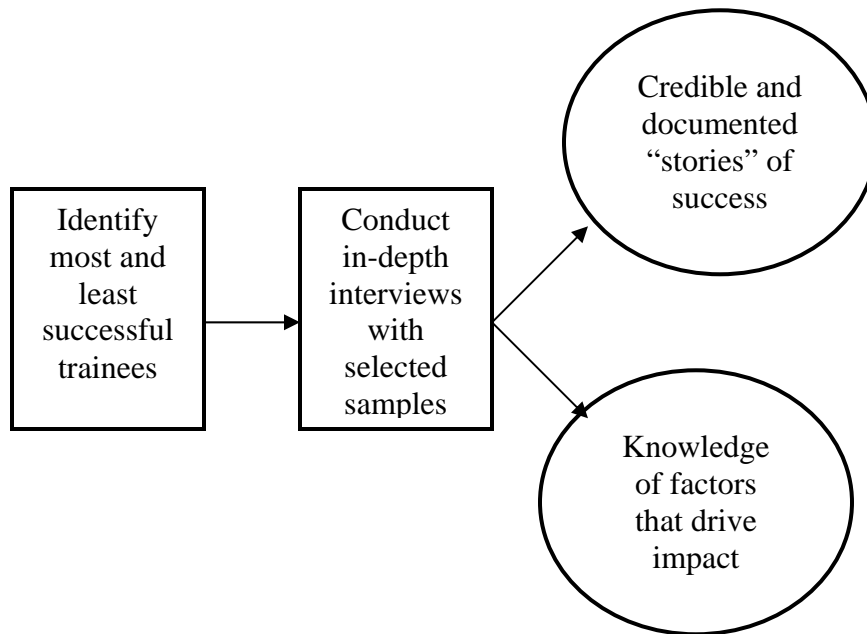
The Success Case Evaluation Method® Process Overview

Initial Survey

Follow-up Inquiry

Immediate Results

Benefits and Applications



- **Irrefutable evidence of training results and impact**
- **Information to educate customers of training**
- **Marketing**
- **Justifying budgets**
- **Designing impact enhancement procedures**
- **Redesigning training processes**
- **Telling Training's Story!**

Kinds of Success Case Evaluation Method® Findings & Conclusions

The SCM, depending on variations in design and implementation, enables a range of strategic and useful conclusions.

Finding/Conclusion	Example
Nature of impact – evidence that something works	Supervisors used their program-acquired skills to reduce turnover, defuse potentially grievable situations, improve performance, and avoid possible lawsuits
Value of impact	<p>One financial advisor used her emotional intelligence training to increase assets managed from \$237,000 to more than \$2.7 million</p> <p>Sixteen percent (16%) of participants used their learning in ways that led directly to help achieve business results worth an average of \$26,000 per trainee</p>
Scope of impact and application	28% of all trainees used their learning in a way that contributed to significant business results, including increased sales revenues, increased shelf space and location, and decreased losses from shrinkage
Unrealized value (What was the cost on “non-compliance” or non usage of learning?)	Forty-six percent (46%) of participants reported little or no impact. Had one-half of these trainees applied their learning only half as well as the trainees reporting the greatest impact, their distributorships would have realized an additional business benefit worth an average of \$65,000 in the first quarter following training.
What worked and what did not	<p>The “framing positive outlooks” element of the 2 day training (about 15% of all the training) accounted for nearly 85% of the business impact. Certain elements of the training were not used at all.</p> <p>The training created the greatest impact with new route drivers but was largely ineffective with veteran drivers</p>
What performance support factors helped create impact and what hindered?	<p>Managers who conducted a pre-training briefing with their employees realized, on average, reductions in scrap rates of 12%. Managers who did not conduct this briefing realized no scrap rate improvements.</p> <p>Eighty-seven percent (77.4%) of successful users of the leadership skills worked in distributorship settings that provided weekly targeted performance feedback and data related to operations goals</p>
Estimates of ROI	Thirty-six percent (36%) of participating distributors achieved profit increases due to avoidance in losses worth on average \$135,000 per distributor over and above the cost of the training and associated performance support (approximately \$22,000). On the other hand, more than one third (24) of distributors sustained virtually a total direct cost loss of \$12,000 per distributor (the dollars spent on training) and an additional estimated opportunity cost-loss of \$65,000 as they realized no measurable performance benefits after the training.

Leadership Training Impact – Example Success Case MethodSM Findings

Introduction

This executive summary excerpt contains key findings from the initial team leadership communications training for Bullfrog Beverages distributors who participated in the first round of training. This Success Case Evaluation Method[®] study was conducted approximately three months after the course was completed.

Findings

- 1. Significant business impact has resulted from the leadership training.**
 - 44% of all trainees used their learning in a way that contributed to significant business results, including increased sales revenues, increased shelf space and location, and decreased losses from shrinkage.
 - Impact evidence was confirmed by managers, direct reports, and by records and reports maintained by distributors.
- 2. Twenty percent (20%) of participants used their learning in ways that led directly to help achieve business results worth an average of \$27,000 per trainee.** Trainees in this highest impact category reported documented instances where application of training led to a range of impacts, including increase in sales revenues from new staff, decreased time to profitability from new hires, decrease of loss and so forth. For more detail, see “Impact profiles” included in the complete report.
- 3. Business impact was left unrealized with 56% of the trainees** Fifty-six percent (56%) of participants reported little or no impact. Had one-half of these trainees applied their learning only half as well as the trainees reporting the greatest impact, their distributorships would have realized an additional business benefit worth an average of \$54,000.

4. Impact of training was associated with the level of usage of learning and performance support resources. Usage of resources was analyzed for trainees in the highest and lowest one-third impact categories. Key findings are as follows

<i>Resources Used*</i>	<i>Highest Impact Trainees</i>	<i>Lowest Impact Trainees</i>
Trainee's manager completed "How to Support Learning & Performance" module	85.2%	17.7%
Trainee and Manager met to discuss and produce an Individual Impact Map	68.4%	07.2%
Trainee developed a specific end-of-course action plan	98.2%	89.4%
HRD Leader provides performance obstacles survey report to Managers	100%	100%
Trainee met with manager after training and reviewed action plan	34.3%	0.6%

* Note: These impact enhancing methods and tools are part of the *Advantage Way High Impact Learning Systems*[®] approach. For more information, contact www.AdvantagePerformance.com

5. Positive return on investment (ROI) from this training was achieved by 31 of the 70 distributorships that participated in the first round of training. Benefits in the form of revenue increases and profit increases due to avoidance in losses worth on average \$60,000 per distributor were realized by more than half of participating distributors in the quarter following the application of training. On the other hand, more than one third (24) of distributors sustained a direct cost loss of \$12,000 per distributor (the dollars spent on training) and an additional estimated opportunity-cost loss of \$30,000 as they realized no measurable performance benefits after the training.

Case Examples

Some recent stories reported from the Advantage Way User's Group. . .

Pitney Bowes

- Implemented “Impact Booster” educational sessions for managers prior to sales training; helped managers have an “Impact Map “ dialogue with each new trainee receiving training during 2005*
- Used the Success Case Evaluation Method® after new process to gauge success
- Increase in systems sales of 40% since new high impact processes instituted
- Led to policy changes regarding requiring Impact Maps of all new trainees

*Note: Tools used are part of Advantage Way high impact learning process; www.advantageperformance.com

Ingersoll Rand

- Used the Success Case Evaluation Method® to assess impact of a new marketing training program for senior managers
- Identified and reported a single instance of a trainee using new learning to achieve a \$1.8 million increase in operating income

Other SCM application examples (as documented in *Telling Training's Story*, 2006, Berrett Koehler). . .

Coffee Bean and Tea leaf, Inc.

Identified significant increases in store manager performance and business goals when manager training was accompanied by coaching assistance

Grundfos, Inc (Denmark)

Reported dramatic success from a sales training initiative

Allstate Insurance

Used the SCM to report on success from a leadership development program that also pinpointed key success factors

Hewlett Packard

Assessed a very successful technical training program, and discovered performance systems factors that could save hundreds of thousands of dollars in future training

Success Case Method Frequently Asked Questions

The SC method is not a comprehensive and “one size fits all” sort of approach. It is a useful tool that change leaders and others can use to help them get information, quickly and relatively cheaply, that they can use to more effectively guide change initiatives.

Question: Isn't the SC method biased since it looks only at a few cases? Answer: Yes. It is biased. A SC study intentionally looks for the most successful (and the least successful) participants and outcomes. It is very helpful to learn from those few users of a new innovation – the “pioneers” – who are experiencing the greatest success and those who were not able to use it. Their experience can tell us a lot about how to make improvements and get even more success with more people.

Question: How can you judge the whole success of a program based on just a few cases? Answer: You can't and the SC method does not try to. What we learn is this: If a program is working at all, then what is the best that it is doing? What seems to be working, and what is not? Decisions to keep or get rid of a program should usually be based on more information. But... if no one is using it, or the very best usage leads only to marginal outcomes, this may be enough to make the summative decision.

Question: What about the “average” participant and the overall effect of a program? Answer: The SC approach is not concerned with the “average” as in typical, or statistical mean performance. Almost always a new initiative will work quite well with some people, and not at all with others. When you add all these instances together and divide by the total number (as a quantitative analysis model requires you to do), you can misrepresent the reality of the program. In fact, there may be no such thing as the “mean” participant, since all the action is at the extreme successful and non-successful ends of the spectrum.

Question: Is the Success Case method scientific? Answer: Yes, it is based on solid rules and discipline of scientific inquiry. Success Cases must be supported by verifiable and pertinent evidence. The interview portion of the SC method relies on the rules of good naturalistic inquiry and reporting. Success Case stories should be supported with evidence that would “stand up in court”. The survey portion of a SC study follows the rules of good survey methods.

Question: Do you have to be an evaluation expert to use the Success Case method? Answer: No. People with a reasonable amount of interpersonal skill and common sense can implement many simple SC studies. But it would often be a good idea to get some expert assistance with some of the tasks if you are not familiar with surveys, interviewing, etc.

Question: How is the SCM different from other evaluation approaches? Answer: It is similar in that it uses many of the same tools of typical evaluation, such as survey, statistical analysis (sometimes) and interviewing. It is different, however, in that the SCM does not seek to be nor claim to be a comprehensive approach. Overall, the SCM is quite a bit more simple, faster, and often more credible, than more comprehensive and expensive evaluation methods.

References:

Robert O. Brinkerhoff, *Telling Training's Story* (2006) Berrett Koehler, San Francisco

Robert O. Brinkerhoff & Dennis E. Dressler, “Using evaluation to build organizational performance and learning capability: a strategy and a method”, *Performance Improvement*, July 2002, vol. 41, #6, (International Society for Performance Improvement, Silver Spring, MD)

The Success Case Evaluation MethodSM

The Success Case Method (SCM) is research-based and produces highly credible and trustworthy training impact data in a way that senior managers believe and understand in a practical and efficient process. The SCM is a proven approach, and has been adopted by leading companies, including Hewlett-Packard, Delta Airlines, Steelcase, among others.

About the Success Case Method

A major challenge for organizations today is how to leverage learning—consistently, quickly, and effectively—into improved performance. The Success Case Method (SCM) is an innovative approach that leverages evaluation of training as a strategic tool for helping build organizational learning-to-performance capability.

Traditional training evaluation and “ROI” methods often fail to convincingly demonstrate training’s contribution to business impact, and mislead audiences with suspicious statistics, overblown claims of return-on-investment, and misrepresentations of causality. The Success Case Method approach discovers and documents brief but richly detailed “stories” of training success that credibly portray how real trainees have used new learning to achieve noteworthy results and real business value. Trading statistical significance for authentic verifiability – evidence that would “stand up in court” – success case data convincingly demonstrate the value of training in ways that senior leaders believe and understand. At the same time, this approach pinpoints the critical systemic factors that make or break training impact.

The SCM helps managers – and eventually the entire organization – increase capability to leverage learning into performance and business results by focusing on three primary questions:

- How well are using learning to drive needed performance improvement?
- What are we doing right that facilitates performance improvement from learning that we should maintain and strengthen?
- What are we doing, or not doing, that is impeding performance improvement from learning that needs to change?

While the SCM provides compelling evidence of the business impact derived through training and shows the best that training does, it is not a defensive or self-serving initiative. Rather, it is fully aligned with the overall training mission: to build organizational performance and capability through learning. SCM “teaches” managers and others how to leverage performance and business results from their investments in employee learning. And, because it identifies critical performance system factors that impede impact and ROI, the SCM “opens the door” to performance improvement consultation.

Certification in the SCM is available and achieved through an action-learning process where participants complete an actual SCM study while receiving coaching and technical assistance from an expert and experienced SCM practitioner. Contact Dennis Dressler at The Learning Alliance, Inc. [ddressler@chartermi.net] for more information

Implementing a Success Case Evaluation Method® Impact Study

The Five Steps

