



DEFINE BUSINESS OUTCOMES

Management must always, in every decision and action, put economic performance first. It can only justify its existence and its authority by the economic results it produces. There may be great non-economic results: the happiness of the members of the enterprise, the contribution to the welfare or culture of the community, etc. Yet management has failed if it fails to produce economic results. . . . It has failed if it does not improve, or at least maintain, the wealth-producing capacity of the economic resources entrusted to it.

—PETER DRUCKER

In the final analysis, organizations invest in training and development and other corporate-enabled learning initiatives for one and only one reason: to improve the performance of individuals and, thereby, the organization as a whole. Effective learning contributes to the success of the enterprise in many ways: directly—through enhanced job performance—and indirectly—through better retention, recruitment, employee commitment, and so forth. Organizations seek to facilitate learning as a purposeful *business activity* to ensure their own success and the success of their people.

Learning agility and speed are essential to remaining competitive, perhaps even viable, in an increasingly knowledge-driven global economy. According to Warren Bennis, Distinguished Professor of Business Administration at USC's Leadership Institute: "It isn't about 'treating people nice;' it's about helping develop people to be at their very best, because that's the only way that companies are going to succeed. It's human capital that is the basis for competitive advantage" (Bennis, n.d.). As one of the most famous CEOs at Proctor & Gamble, Richard "Red" Deupree, put it: "If you leave us our buildings and our brands but take away our people, the company will fail" (quoted in Dyer, Dalzell, & Olegario, 2004, p. 159).

Thus, the true measure of success for corporate training and development initiatives is the extent to which they enhance the value of the organization's human capital and help it achieve its mission. That is a new and more demanding standard. In the past, "delivering a great training program was sufficient. But not anymore. Global competition, market pressures for performance, and the recent economic downturn have moved the finish line. There is a new criterion for training success: improved performance on the job" (Wick, Pollock, & Jefferson, 2009). Delivering great learning experiences is still important, but only as part of a *process* that delivers great outcomes for the business. And the only way to know whether the learning organization has achieved its goal is to agree *in advance* on the outcomes that matter most and the definition of success.

Thus, the First Discipline (D1) of breakthrough learning is to clearly define, in partnership with line leaders, the desired *business* outcomes. In this chapter we underscore the importance of shifting the focus of training and development from learning outcomes to business outcomes and we provide tools and guidance for making the transition. Topics include:

- Begin with the end in mind
- Express outcomes in business terms
- Pick the right problems
- Translate needs into deliverables
- Avoid training traps
- Manage expectations
- A checklist for D1
- Action points for learning and line leaders



Begin with the End in Mind

One of the habits of highly effective people is that they begin with the end in mind (Covey, 2004, p. 96). The same principle applies to highly effective learning organizations. Corporate training and development initiatives should always be a means to an end, not ends unto themselves. The specific "end" to be achieved depends on the nature and drivers of the business and its opportunities, challenges, and environment. Regardless of the specific objective to be achieved, however, all corporate learning is aimed at improving the performance of the business in some way (see Case in Point D1.1 and Figure D1.1). Thus, helping employees learn to deliver more effective leadership, reduce accidents, provide superior customer service, accelerate product development, enhance teamwork, give more effective

Case in Point D1.1 Learning as a Business Strategy

One company that really understands the strategic nature of learning is Ingersoll Rand. As Rita Smith, vice president of enterprise learning, puts it: “We’re here for only one reason: to help drive business outcomes. We need to understand the business strategy, key strategic drivers, external threats, and financial metrics. We literally need to be bilingual, speaking the languages of both learning and business” (Smith, 2008).

Ingersoll-Rand’s CEO, Herb Henkel, sees learning as a key strategic lever, so much so that he has made it an integral part of the strategic planning process: “When we go through the strategic planning process, we come up with ideas, strategies, and visions of where we’re going to be. Then we decide what to invest in to get the things we want. So I look at how many dollars we spend on bricks and mortar; how many on developing new products; and how much training we need to be able to meet our goals. Built into the planning process is the assumption that there will have to be some kind of training. So we consider it no different than we would anything else in terms of investment decisions” (quoted in Bingham & Galagan, 2008).

presentations, and so forth, are all undertaken with the ultimate goal of improving the company’s financial health and performance.

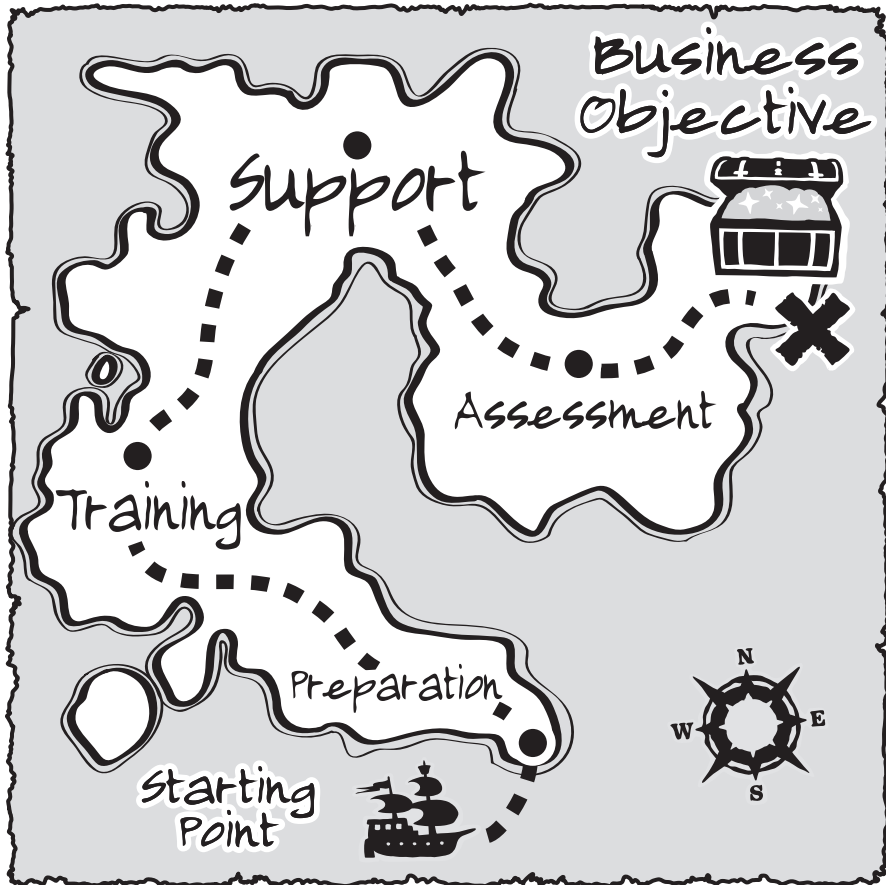
The effectiveness of a learning intervention, then, is the extent to which it helps the organization achieve the “end in mind.” It follows that effectiveness can only be assessed—and success declared—if the goals of the intervention are clearly defined at the outset and those goals are aligned with and contribute to organizational effectiveness.

Goals Are Prerequisite for Success

In the absence of clearly defined, business-relevant objectives, learning organizations can never “win” in their quest for recognition and resources. Sporting events are fun to watch because everyone knows the rules and what “winning” means. Races have clearly marked finish lines. Other competitions have established goals and scoring. No one would pay to watch a football game if the rules were decided after the game or if winning were based on which team enjoyed themselves the most. No one would invest in stocks in the absence of accounting principles and bottom-line measures of success.

Similarly, an effective commission plan drives sales behavior because it spells out how salespeople can increase their financial rewards. Contracts include specified performance levels to avoid future disagreement about deliverables. The

FIGURE D1.1. EFFECTIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS ALWAYS KEEP THE BUSINESS OBJECTIVE IN MIND



evidence required to support a specific therapeutic claim is agreed upon with the FDA in advance of clinical studies. Management by objectives works when individuals meet with their managers to define goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

The objectives for a learning and development initiative should be no different. Management and the learning organization need to work together to define the “Conditions of Satisfaction” early in the development process (see Case in Point D1.2). The promised results and the way in which they will be measured

Case in Point D1.2 Conditions of Satisfaction

When we asked Richard Leider, award-winning coauthor of *Whistle While You Work* and *Claiming Your Place at the Fire*, about the importance of defining objectives, he told us that it was vital and went on to explain:

“We teach leaders how to create what we call COS—conditions of satisfaction. What are your conditions of satisfaction? What is it that we are supposed to do differently after this and by when? What is it that you want delivered by when? Or created by when?”

“You could call it accountability, but when leaders lead, they are customers. For leadership development, the line leader is a customer. She makes a request; she puts out certain conditions of satisfaction. And so this whole notion of leader as customer translates into the training, and therefore the follow-up practice; leaders have certain conditions of satisfaction for training.

“So often leaders are not clear about their conditions of satisfaction. There is a certain language and a certain rigor that leaders need to learn in order for meetings and training and transactions to be effective. It really clears up all that murkiness. You could say it is common sense; well, the fact is—look where the breakdowns are.”

should be agreed to as part of the design, not as an afterthought. The point is that learning and development can never compete successfully or truly claim success if the goalposts are not set out, fixed in position, and agreed to in advance.

Only then do those responsible for implementation have the opportunity to excel.

Business results must be the touchstone for defining learning and development objectives, the “true north” against which programs are designed, implemented, and measured. Any other organizing principle is likely to get the initiative off course, because as David Campbell put it: “If you don’t know where you are going, you will probably end up someplace else” (Campbell, 1974).

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That learning and development programs should be designed with the end in mind hardly seems like a revelation. For at least twenty years, virtually all instructional design models—ADDIE and its many derivatives—have stressed the importance of starting with analysis and defining learning objectives. Similarly, “focus on outcomes” is the first standard of the International Society for Performance Improvement’s Human Performance Technology (International Society for Performance Improvement, 2002, p. 1). Fifteen years ago, the Robinsons

published the first edition of *Performance Consulting*, which recognized that the real responsibility of professionals in human resources, learning, and organizational development roles was “enhancing people’s performance in support of business goals” (Robinson & Robinson, 1995).

Yet our experience across dozens of companies and hundreds of programs suggests that, to this day, most learning initiatives do not go far enough in defining their ultimate purpose. Most are still content to define objectives “at the end of this program” when in fact, “It is not sufficient that people attend a training program and acquire skill; what ultimately matters is that these individuals apply the skills on the job so that their performance improves and the business benefits” (Robinson & Robinson, 2008, p. 2).

In other words, the “finish line” for learning is not at the end of the program, but much later, on the job, after learning transfer. The Robinsons’ quote sums up the distinction between the practice of D1—defining business outcomes—and the more common practice of defining learning outcomes, which often fail to make the link to the ultimate purpose explicit. Effective programs define their objectives in terms of on-the-job behaviors and business results; less effective programs merely define what will be learned or covered.

Susan Burnett, currently senior vice president for talent and organizational development at Yahoo!, explains: “One of our strategic conclusions at Deloitte was that we needed to design and deliver outcome-based learning (see Case in Point D2.3). What I tell my team is that you have to change the conversation you have with your business partners. If you talk about what kind of training they need, you’re going to get a laundry list. It’s got to be all about the business outcomes; that’s the power of the Six Disciplines—it starts there.

“If I ever write a book, it’s going to be about why learning and development organizations get so disconnected from the business and how to fix it. I often feel that this is a profession without a professional process” (Burnett, personal communication, 2009). The Six Disciplines define a process to keep learning connected to and focused on the business—a process that starts by getting crystal clear about purpose and outcomes.



Express Outcomes in Business Terms

Throughout this discussion, we will repeatedly emphasize that goals for learning initiatives need to be expressed as “business outcomes.” Drucker’s famous dictum with which we began this chapter is uncompromising: Management’s responsibility is to ensure that every investment a company makes generates economic value. Business is, in the end, about financial return.

While Drucker was writing about for-profit companies, leaders of non-profit and government organizations must also ensure that every expenditure they approve contributes to the goals of the organization, even though these do not include “profit” as such. Training in leadership, ethics, diversity, and so forth are laudable (have merit) in their own right, but they must also pay dividends (have worth) in terms of lower operating costs, greater productivity, enhanced employee commitment, improved consumer confidence, and so forth. Programs that help participants improve their personal performance also pay dividends in greater job satisfaction, motivation, discretionary effort, and retention.

What we are saying is that every corporate-sponsored learning initiative must (ultimately) produce a positive financial return, directly or indirectly; it is the only acceptable justification for continued investment. That may strike some readers as crass and mercenary, especially those who believe that helping people develop and grow is the “right thing to do.” We agree that it is the right thing to do and a corporate obligation. At the same time, we are convinced that the ability to define and deliver business benefit is the only way for learning and development to prove its value. The best defense against having the training budget cut is to show convincingly that doing so ultimately hurts the bottom line and reduces the probability of organizational success. “Learning is essential only to the degree that it contributes more to performance than other allocations of scarce resources” (Danielson & Wiggenhorn, 2003, p. 20).

Results Can Be Measured

We should pause here to address a common misperception. A frequent excuse for failing to define the expected results of learning and development is that “they cannot be measured.” A comment supposedly made by Jack Welch to that effect is often cited as proof. What he actually said was “We will not measure our learning systems *in the same way* that we do other business initiatives. To do so would only trivialize them” (quoted in Baldwin & Danielson, 2000, emphasis added).

We do not deny that it can be difficult to isolate and quantify the specific contribution of training. Many factors influence business results: overall economic climate, success of marketing, competitors’ actions, new market entrants, and, in many businesses, even the weather. But those same factors also confound the evaluation of sales, marketing, and other business activities. Those functions are nevertheless held accountable, and rewarded for, delivering on their promises. That something is difficult to measure with precision, or that it is influenced by numerous other factors, is no excuse for not defining and evaluating outcomes.

As we will discuss more fully in D6, the fundamental “claim” or promise of training is that “if you give the learning organization money and your employees’ time, we will help improve their performance.” Such a claim requires evidence to back it up. By analogy, consider health claims. When a pharmaceutical company develops a new drug, it must specify the drug’s claims—what it supposedly treats or cures. The company must then provide the regulatory authorities in the countries in which it wants to market evidence that shows *beyond a reasonable doubt* that the drug does, in fact, do what it claims to do. Data must be obtained from real patients in real time.

How well a drug works in real patients, however, is influenced by many other factors—lifestyle, concurrent diseases, stage of illness, and genetic background (Figure D1.2). Patients don’t necessarily follow the directions correctly and the outcomes may be quite hard to measure. No matter. If a company wants the rights to market a drug, it has to design and execute an evaluation that unequivocally supports its claims, these difficulties notwithstanding.

Before the Food and Drug Administration was established, patent medicine purveyors made any claim they wanted. The result was the “snake oil salesman” who made extravagant claims in order to sell quack remedies to the gullible—remedies that would supposedly cure whatever ailed them. To avoid promulgating such unsupported remedies in education, a consortium of the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education prepared the “Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing.” The standards require that measures (and by inference, human resource programs based on those measures) be reliable and valid predictors of the value to individuals and organizations. The standards acknowledge the difficulty of reliably defining and measuring the outcome of educational programs, but they are clear that such difficulty does not provide an exemption.

Measurement is an integral part of human endeavor.

The same is true in business. “Experience with several CEOs and top teams, and regular discussion with their advisors, convince me that the rejection of measures in learning is a dead end. Measurement is an integral part of human endeavor, and its power can’t be cancelled out by high-sounding sentiment” (Bordonaro, 2005, p. 229). To claim that the effects of learning and development cannot be measured is wrong-headed and potentially dangerous; if the positive effects of learning and development cannot be measured, then presumably neither can the negative effects of reducing or eliminating it. Failure to routinely document the business value of training and development undoubtedly contributes to the practice of making training budgets among the first to be cut in periods

FIGURE D1.2. MANY FACTORS BESIDES TRAINING AFFECT BUSINESS RESULTS JUST AS MANY FACTORS BESIDES A DRUG AFFECT MEDICAL OUTCOMES

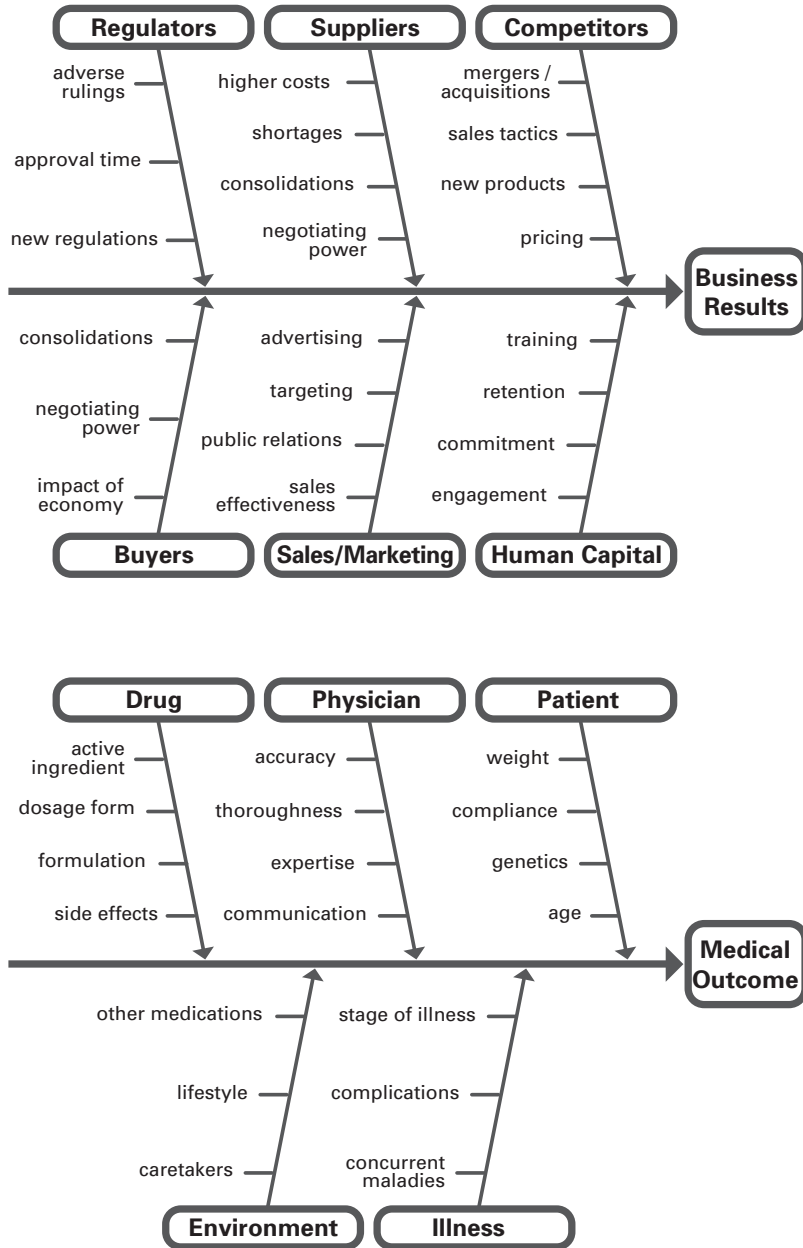


TABLE D1.1. COMPARISON OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND BUSINESS OUTCOMES

	Traditional Learning Objectives	Business Outcomes Objectives
Timing	End of course	On-the-job
Focus	Abilities and capabilities	Behaviors and results

of belt tightening. The discipline of always starting with business outcomes is an important safeguard against this eventuality. Because it defines the conditions of success as outcomes that matter to management, they will be more reluctant to give them up.

Business Outcomes Versus Learning Objectives

Making the shift from defining learning objectives to defining business outcomes is, on the one hand, a subtle change for the learning organization, but it has profound implications. Defining business outcomes differs from the traditional practice of defining learning outcomes in two important dimensions: timing and focus (Table D1.1).

The vast majority of course objectives that we see are learning objectives that define *capabilities*—what participants will know or be able to do at the end of the course of instruction. In contrast, the business-centric outcomes we advocate focus on *performance*—what participants will do on the job—their behaviors and the results they will generate (Table D1.2). That distinction is crucial, because learning only creates value when it is transferred and applied to the work of the individual and the organization. “High-quality learning and training do not necessarily translate into business results. Enterprise learning must be driven with the end in mind: the business results to be achieved” (Vanthournout & others, 2006, p. 17). Defining learning objectives is still an essential part of the instructional design process, but they are subordinate to the business objectives; they are a means to the end, not the ultimate objective.

Being explicit about the *business outcomes* that a learning program is intended to achieve has many advantages:

- It makes explicit the business value of the time and money that will be invested.
 - As such, it garners greater support from both managers and participants.
 - It helps management prioritize training in the same way it weighs other investments (see Case in Point D1.1).

- It answers the “what’s in it for me?” question for participants and therefore satisfies one of the principles of adult learning: the need to know *Why?*
- It highlights the need for managerial involvement, since managers control the environment in which transfer and application must occur.
- It provides alignment with the business and a clear criterion against which to evaluate potential approaches: *Is this the best way to achieve the result?*
- The outcomes are stated in a way that makes how to measure them apparent.

“The minute that the trainer or researcher takes on the performance perspective, the whole thought process becomes that of an organizational stakeholder or organizational systems expert. . . . The performance perspective creates rational performance goals and the matrix of connections of variables and levels within the organization needed to ensure the appropriate actions and performance” (Swanson, 2003, p. 122).

It’s Not Just About Money

Defining outcomes in business terms does not, however, mean that every outcome must be stated in financial terms or that ROI is the only measure of interest to business leaders. Such reductionism is not always necessary or desirable (as we

**TABLE D1.2. EXAMPLES OF BUSINESS OUTCOMES
VERSUS LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Learning Objective	Business Outcome
Be able to describe the leadership styles and development stages of the situational leadership model and match the appropriate style to a developmental stage	Increase the productivity of your team and your managerial effectiveness by correctly utilizing the situational leadership model
Be able to apply the Six Sigma DMADDI model to a business process	Reduce the number of errors in the order entry process by applying Six Sigma tools and processes
Be able to explain each of the 6Ds and give an example of their application in corporate learning	Reduce the amount of learning that goes unused by applying the 6Ds to learning program design and execution
Demonstrate how to give effective feedback to a direct report	Increase employee commitment by giving more frequent and more effective feedback
Show how to use reframing to overcome customers’ objections	Increase sales by discovering and addressing customers’ objections

will discuss in greater detail in D6, documenting results). Suffice it to say here that “business outcomes” include a wide range of potential metrics in addition to financial measures, such as increased customer satisfaction, greater employee commitment, enhanced leadership effectiveness, more productive sales approaches, improved work quality, and so forth. While these are not direct financial measures, business leaders understand that they are key contributors to financial performance and are often leading indicators of future business success.

Indeed, business leaders may not want, or give credence to, efforts to more directly monetize the outcomes of training (Redford, 2007). A study at Ashridge Business School, for example, found that line leaders were actually more flexible about what defined acceptable outcomes than were learning leaders (Charlton & Osterweil, 2005). The authors concluded: “Sponsors may not be as wedded to proof of financial ROI as many HR professionals assume” (p. 13).

If a clear causal link has already been established between certain behaviors (for example, better coaching of subordinates) and financial returns (lower employment costs as a result of greater retention), then it may be less expensive, more useful, and more credible to document increases in the desired behaviors rather than to apply an abstract financial transmogrification. Charles Jennings, head of global learning at Reuters, agrees: “A customer services manager will not care about ROI, but they will want to understand how learning improves customer satisfaction” (quoted in Redford, 2007).

Sponsors may not be as wedded to proof of financial ROI as many HR professionals assume.

By “business outcomes” we mean *verifiable outcomes of relevance to the business* of the organization. We mean defining a goal of the program as, for example, “participants’ direct reports will receive more frequent and more effective coaching” rather than “participants will be able to demonstrate the SBA approach to providing feedback.” The former is concrete, measurable, and linked to business needs. The latter could be tested and measured, but that misses the point. The issue is not whether the new approach was learned and even demonstrable, but whether it is used in the participant’s daily work in a way that benefits the organization. “New skills and knowledge alone do not add value; they must be applied, then nurtured until improved performance can be counted on consistently to produce an important job result” (Brinkerhoff & Apking, 2001, p. 4).

A program that will increase customer satisfaction is worthy of investment; a program that delivers only attendee satisfaction is not. Learning and development’s task is not completed until learning has been transferred and applied in a way that produces results; the measure of its success is in business terms.

“Effective training occurs when it is fully transferred and when performance achieves or exceeds business goals” (Wall & White, 1997, p. 169).



Pick the Right Problems

The essence of military success is to concentrate the right resources on the right battlefield at the right time. The essence of success for a learning organization is to concentrate the right resources on the right issues at the right time. The more limited its resources, the more important it is for a learning organization to focus on those issues and opportunities that have highest potential return. But how do you know which are the right issues? There are five keys:

- Understand the business
- Understand the current situation
- Do your market research
- Translate needs into desired outcomes
- Enforce priorities

Understand the Business

There is no substitute for understanding the business. For training and development to add value, learning leaders need to understand the fundamental nature of the business in which their organization is engaged. That is not to say that they have to be experts in finance, or business strategy, or marketing, or manufacturing. They do not all need to rush out to earn MBAs. But they do need to have a clear sense of how their organization fulfills its mission, makes money, and differentiates itself in the marketplace. In their book, *What CEOs Expect from Corporate Training*, Rothwell, Lindholm, and Wallick (2003) list the seven competencies that CEOs expect from workplace learning professionals. “Business knowledge” heads the list.

Business leaders want learning professionals who understand business in general. But what they *really* want is learning professionals who understand *their specific business*, who can clearly and succinctly explain the business model of their company or division and its most important business drivers and challenges. They want learning leaders who understand what keeps the business leaders up at night, the human capital limitations to growth, and therefore how learning and talent development can best help the company achieve its goals.

Business leaders want learning professionals who understand business.

Plastipak Academy received Corporate University Xchange's Exemplary Practice Award for Business Alignment in 2010. According to Academy Leader Diane Hinton, "Plastipak Academy's success is built on our reputation as a business function that drives real business results through targeted learning solutions. We talk about business issues with leaders, not just in the context of learning and development. And, we emphasize collaboration throughout the learning development and implementation process, leveraging leader involvement and learning transfer to achieve business results."

Test yourself. Can you answer the questions in Exhibit D1.1? If so, congratulations, you are in touch with your business. If not, or if you struggled with some of the questions, then you have the opportunity to improve your performance by deepening your understanding of your organization's business.

How can you deepen your knowledge about the business and thereby enhance your value as a business partner? There are ample learning opportunities on the job and in the course of your work. The first and critical requirements are interest and curiosity. Once you become genuinely interested in how the business works and curious about the kinds of questions in Exhibit D1.1, you will find plenty of

Exhibit D1.1

Self-Test of Business Knowledge

Answer the following questions about your business:

1. The most important source of our revenue is:
2. The most important driver of our growth is:
3. The core elements of our strategy are (list):
4. Our main competitor is:
5. The greatest threat we face is:
6. The greatest human capital challenge we face as a company is:

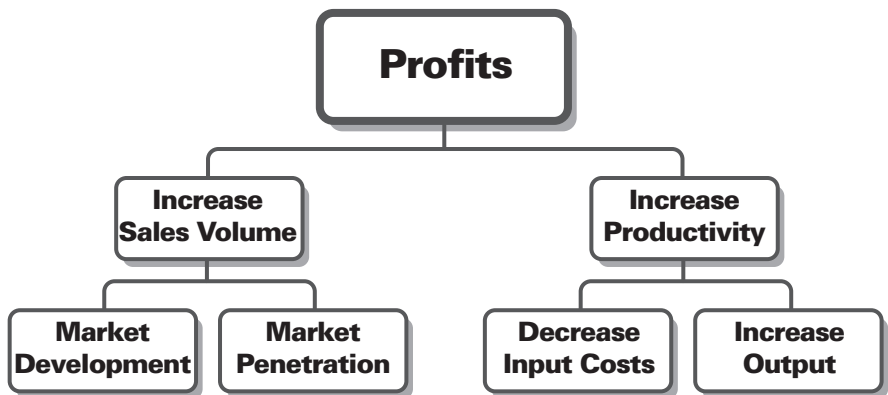
information and opportunities to deepen your understanding in business plans, reports, and conversations with business leaders.

Boudreau (2010) makes the point that the more that HR leaders are able to explain what they do using the *business models* that line managers use intuitively, the better they will be understood. An example would be relating managing a talent pool to an inventory management model. Business leaders understand the kinds of tradeoffs that must be made in setting inventory levels for various products or raw materials; there are direct parallels to managing the talent inventory. Likewise, business managers understand process management and process improvement models in manufacturing; explaining the parallels to the learning process will help them appreciate why treating learning as an isolated event will always sub-optimize the results.

An example of such a model is given in Figure D1.3. It illustrates the concept that there are only two fundamental paths to improving business results: (1) increase revenue (sales volume); and (2) increase productivity (reduce the cost of providing products and services).

For example, sales training that generates more effective sales behaviors contributes to the sales volume path. Safety training that reduces time lost in accidents contributes to productivity through lower costs and greater output. It is important to note that it is not the training as such that contributes to the organization's success, but the actions that flow from training. Indeed, training itself actually *increases* cost and *lowers* productivity unless it is transferred to work and translated into productive behavior. Improved actions and changed behaviors necessarily *precede* business impact (Figure D1.4). This sequence of events is relevant to both defining outcomes (D1) and documenting results (D6). A change in behavior will be the first evidence that the program is having the desired effect. It is therefore a *leading indicator* of business impact.

FIGURE D1.3. PATHWAYS TO IMPROVING BUSINESS RESULTS



On the other hand, a program that fails to change behavior is unlikely to deliver results and needs to be examined to understand the root cause(s) of the breakdown.

The flow of causality is from left to right, from training to behaviors to results (Figure D1.4). Therefore, learning and development programs must be planned in the opposite direction, from desired results, to the behaviors required to produce them, to the kinds of learning experiences and exercises needed to create the capability to perform optimally (Figure D1.5). To design highly effective learning interventions, you need to know the behaviors—in particular, the high-leverage or *vital behaviors*—that have the greatest impact on the desired results (Patterson, Grenny, Maxfield, McMillan, & Switzler, 2008, p. 28). A key task of the analysis phase of the ADDIE, TDQAS, and other instructional design approaches is to identify the critical knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform required tasks and then use these to inform the design process.

Training, of course, is only part of the process of learning and adopting new and more effective behaviors. In D2, we will talk about the importance of designing the whole experience to optimize the behavioral change. In D3, we will discuss how delivery affects learning transfer, and in D4 and D5, how the transfer climate regulates the conversion rate of learning to performance.

FIGURE D1.4. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PRODUCES RESULTS THROUGH NEW AND MORE EFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS BY THE PARTICIPANTS

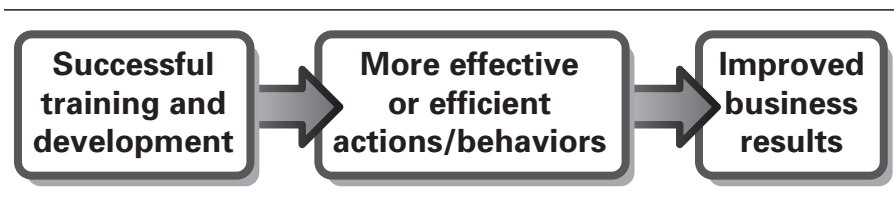
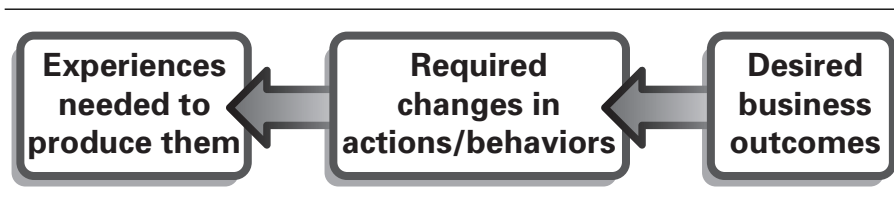


FIGURE D1.5. DESIGN LEARNING PROGRAMS STARTING WITH BUSINESS OUTCOMES AND THE BEHAVIORS REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE THEM



The point here is that learning interventions ultimately contribute to the business by making it more efficient (increasing productivity, reducing waste) or by making it more effective (driving revenue growth) and that the intermediate step in either path requires a change in behavior to new and better ways of doing things. Which path and which behaviors are most critical depend on the organization's business model, climate, and state of development. Therefore, it is essential to understand the current circumstances.

Understand the Current Situation

Once you understand the “big picture” business fundamentals of your enterprise, you are in a position to take the next step, which is to discover the highest value needs or opportunities that training and development could help fulfill.

It is important to invest this effort upfront. Successful companies invest substantial time and effort to discover their customers' most important unmet needs. In the *Innovator's Solution*, Christensen and Raynor (2003) explain: “When customers become aware of a job that they need to get done in their lives, they look around for a product or service that they can ‘hire’ to get the job done.” Therefore, “companies that target their products at the circumstances in which customers find themselves, rather than the customers themselves, are those that can launch predictably successful products” (p. 75).

In effect, line organizations “hire” learning and development to do a job they need done. The more fully the learning and development group understands the challenges that line managers face—the business ends they are trying to achieve—the better they will be able to deliver solutions that the organization values and rewards with continued investment. Indeed, Swanson (2003) argues that neglect of front-end analysis is one of the most common causes for training transfer failure.

Which improvement targets offer the greatest potential for return is very much time- and situation-specific. They depend on a company's history, environment, market, competitors, product life cycle, cost structure, and so forth. Circumstances change. The most pressing business needs or opportunities this year are likely to be different than last year's. Therefore, the best investment of learning resources (the programs that will deliver the highest value) are also likely to have changed. Corporate learning organizations need to continually scan the environment and adjust their offerings if they are to remain relevant.

In a well-run business, the largest shares of available advertising, sales, marketing, and other resources are committed to those product lines with the greatest potential for growth and profitability. Learning organizations should follow suit, deploying the greatest portion of their resources to opportunities and issues

that are “mission critical.” That may require taking resources away from—or even discontinuing—programs of lesser importance. Making such hard and vital resource allocation decisions is the essence of strategic management. But how do you decide which opportunities are most promising?

Do Your Market Research

Companies decide which customer needs offer the most attractive opportunity for their products and services through market research. Multiple sources of data are consulted. Studies, interviews, and focus groups are conducted to understand what customers want, how much they are willing to pay, how they will judge success, and how they should be segmented and targeted. Defining customer needs for learning and development initiatives should follow a similar approach. Since most key customers for learning and development are internal, the needs analysis should be faster and less expensive than for a consumer product, but for a major program it should be no less thorough.

Two sources of information are available to identify the most valuable training interventions: “explicit knowledge” contained in business plans and reports, and the “tacit knowledge” of leaders, managers, and employees. Both will be needed to make an informed decision. You should begin by reviewing all of the “explicit” published information (strategic plans, business plans, task forces’ or consultants’ reports, and so forth) before taking busy managers’ time for interviews or focus groups.

There are three reasons for this. First, it demonstrates your respect for business leaders’ time and the pressures they face. You should never waste a manager’s time asking him or her to go over things you could have easily read for yourself. Second, you will be afforded more respect—and probably more time—if it is clear that you have done your homework and have generated ideas of your own. Third, with the business plan as background, you will be able to ask more intelligent and penetrating questions and thus reach a deeper level of understanding than if you simply show up and ask to be enlightened.

Get a copy of the business unit’s plan and read it carefully. Review any other relevant company documents, such as a strategic plan, consultant’s report, and competitive analysis. Read actively with an inquisitive mind.

- What is the business unit trying to accomplish?
- What are the business leaders’ key objectives and initiatives?
- What do they list as the competitive threats or downside scenarios?
- What keeps them up at night worrying?
- What are the causes of suboptimal performance that education could help resolve?

- Where are there inefficiencies or inconsistencies that waste significant amounts of time and money?
- Where could an effective training or development program reduce the risk and improve the likelihood or magnitude of the success?

The goal is to understand the business's greatest unmet needs and opportunities and to formulate your own ideas about where learning could add value, rather than just waiting to be told. Understanding the business plan allows you to be proactive, to move from "order taker" to strategic business partner and performance consultant.

Once you have reviewed the available documents and formulated some ideas about key needs, it is time to get out and speak with line leaders. Suggested interview guidelines are given in Exhibit D1.2. Avoid the temptation to interview only other learning leaders or the heads of human resources; the information you gather will be insufficient. However well-informed and well-intentioned they may be, they are one step removed from the action. Likewise, you cannot rely on a single manager's point of view (see "Inadequate Input" below). You have to talk to the people who are in the arena, the people whose careers depend on delivering results. That's crucial, because learning organizations that achieve real alignment and deliver against the needs of the business enjoy strong support, even in the face of financial exigencies (see Case in Point D1.3).

Translate Needs into Desired Outcomes

The goal of your discussions with business leaders is to define the desired outcomes in areas in which learning can help close a critical gap or seize a valuable business opportunity. Since the original publication of *The Six Disciplines*, thousands of learning professionals have used the Outcomes Planning Wheel (Figure D1.6) to help guide and structure discussions with line leaders about training needs.

This simple, four-step approach works well both for prospective discussions with leaders about potential training solutions, as well as to respond to a request for training. We have modified it slightly from the original based on our experience and suggestions from readers and clients. The Wheel is simple to draw—on a flip chart, for example—to help facilitate a group discussion, but also works well one-on-one, even over the phone. Although the questions are numbered and initially approached in order, answers to one question often belong in another quadrant or lead to follow-up questions. Be flexible and modify the flow as necessary to get the information you need; do not feel slavishly bound to the form.

Exhibit D1.2

Interview Guidelines for Discovering Business Needs

Preparation

- Do your homework; read the relevant business plans, reports, and related materials.
- Schedule your interview with the business leader in advance; state the objective and time required.
- Know what you want to get out of the interview before you begin.

The Interview

- Follow the classic sales opening: meet and greet, state the value, propose an agenda, check for agreement.
- Start on time and end on time.
- Use open questions, check for understanding by restating; probe for the deeper issues.
- Summarize what you understood from reading the plan and check your understanding: “From what I was able to read, it seems like the most important things you are trying to accomplish are X, Y, Z. Did I summarize that correctly? What have I missed?”
- Identify the main gaps between current and desired performance. Are there areas in which people lack key skills or capabilities that will make it difficult to achieve the objectives? What one improvement in terms of people’s skills or behaviors would most help the leader achieve his or her objectives?
- Are there new initiatives, opportunities, or strategies that will require new knowledge or skills to execute?
- Use the Outcomes Planning Wheel (Figure D1.6) to help identify the links among overall business needs, desired behaviors, confirmatory evidence, and conditions of success.

Follow-Up

- Immediately following the interview, summarize the discussion in writing.
- Include the answers to the four questions of the Outcomes Planning Wheel as an efficient way to set out your understanding of the linkages between the results desired and the capabilities needed to achieve them.
- Send a thank-you note to the person you interviewed and include a copy of your summary (“Thank you very much for your time. I found our discussion very helpful and enlightening. I attach a brief summary of the key points. Please let me know if I missed or misunderstood anything.”).
- The purpose is four-fold:
 - Summarizing your notes will encourage you to reflect on what you have learned and better cement it in your memory.
 - The document will be a useful reference as the planning process proceeds.
 - Your summary acknowledges that you valued the leader’s time and input.
 - Finally, sharing your summary with the person you interviewed provides him or her with the opportunity to correct any oversights or misunderstandings, which will help you create a superior solution.

Case in Point D1.3 Learning to Effect Change

Health care is a rapidly changing industry. The pace of change places unprecedented demands on its leaders. Skills and approaches that were successful in the past are no longer adequate; new leadership competencies and insights are needed.

Ray Vigil, the chief learning officer for Humana, Inc., believes strongly that the leadership development strategy must be an integral part of the overall business strategy; it must begin with the end in mind. Because these conditions have been met at Humana, the Leadership Institute is viewed by the top management as an important enterprise-wide tool with tremendous positive business impact.

"The CEO wanted to take a very traditional company and move to a consumer-centric point of view, approaching problems and the industry very differently, so that we produced competitive advantage by a disruptive change strategy in the way we go to market. But historically, leaders in health care have not had the same kind of leadership development focus that other industries have had. So the big challenge we had initially was how to take a management team that had been successful with very traditional functional skills and get them to realize that they needed to embrace a very different vision; they had to develop the capability to work across the enterprise, not just in their function.

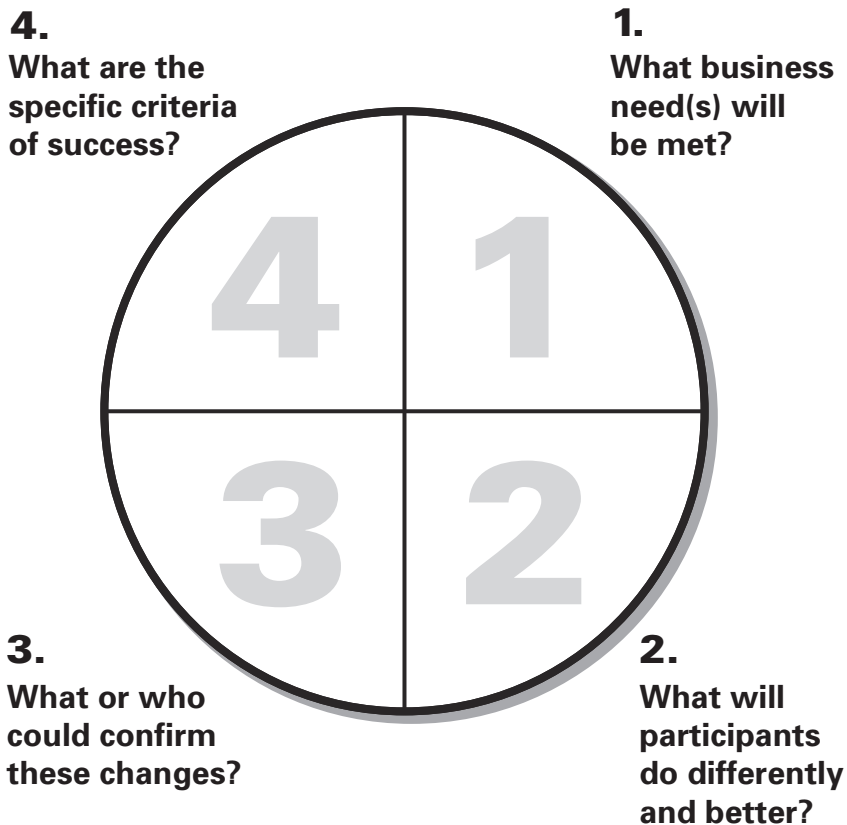
"Our CEO had been working with the senior leadership team to develop an enlightened view and a strategy for becoming a consumer-centric company. While leaders understood the strategy intellectually, they were having difficulty understanding what they had to do differently.

"Most people would say, 'Gee, if you understand something, it ought to be obvious that you take action on it.' But I think it is a very big challenge for people to execute a strategy that is very different from the mindset and skills that brought them success in the past.

"From the beginning, when our CEO said, 'I know I need a chief learning officer,' I interpreted that to mean that he had a business strategy that was going to require a great deal of change leadership, and he needed a learning strategy to complement the business strategy. I was able to convince my team that we needed to think about what we were doing in a strategic sense. We needed to really drill down on where the CEO wanted to take the business and what it was going to take to get us there. What did the future state look like? How do you implement and execute that strategy with the human capital we have?

"We devised something we called the touch-point program to identify the key intersections, the key leverage points with the organization that could make a difference. We identified the key stakeholders and made them part of the design team. They helped us design the whole process, including the evaluation and after-action review. When it came time to implement, everybody was shocked that there was such great acceptance, but that was because we had identified the key leverage points and through the touch-point campaign had incorporated their interests and thinking into the program. Because we started with an outcome of use and what the end state was supposed to look like, we were able to integrate all the pieces into a coherent strategy and an integrated experience for the participants."

FIGURE D1.6. OUTCOMES PLANNING WHEEL



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As you move from a reactive training role into one as a performance consultant, remember that many business leaders are used to simply “ordering” training and have not thought deeply about the questions at the heart of the Outcomes Planning Wheel. You will need to ask some probing and clarifying questions to achieve the mutual level of understanding necessary to develop a truly effective program. You may even encounter resistance from some managers who may feel challenged or threatened by your interest in trying to understand the real rationale behind “we need a program.”

The best approach we have found is to assure the leader up-front that you have the company’s best interest in mind and that the reason for the interview is to maximize the probability of success by saying something like: “*Because training*

will consume participants' time and company money, I want to be sure we deliver the best possible results for you. I'd like to ask you a series of questions to be sure I understand the business drivers behind the request and the outcomes you really want from the training. That will help us design the best and most cost-effective solution."

Throughout the conversation, practice active listening. Stop and check for understanding periodically: *"Let me be sure that I have understood you correctly. [Restate the needs, behaviors, etc. as you understand them]. Is that correct?"* Likewise, do not be afraid to admit you do not understand something: *"Could you explain what you mean by . . ."*

"Help me understand . . ." is a very useful phrase that can be used to genuinely seek understanding, but also as a graceful way to point out inconsistency or confusion, as in: *"Help me understand how the training course you have requested is linked to your business needs."*



The Four Questions

There are four key questions to the Outcomes Planning Wheel. Each is discussed in turn below.

1. What Business Need(s) Will Be Met?

The first question is about the business needs that will be met (or opportunities realized) if the course is a success. The goal is to gain clarity about the real business issue or opportunity behind the request for training. This is critical not only to inform the design of the program, but to make sure that training is an appropriate part of the solution (see "Training Traps" below). Being able to tightly couple training to specific business needs increases the buy-in of the participants and their managers. Learning organizations that have adopted the 6Ds find that they enjoy greater support for their programs when they include the business purpose in the course description rather than when they simply list the topics covered or learning objectives. For example: "This course will help you increase the productivity of your team by . . ." or "This program will help you increase sales by . . ."

You will probably have to ask a series of clarifying questions to get to a definition of business need that is specific enough to be actionable. A manager's first answer to this question often simply asserts the need for training, "We need a training program on the order entry system," as opposed to stating the business need behind the proposed solution or what issue the training program is meant to resolve. The challenge in such cases is to help the client *reframe* the question: "to transition from a focus on the solution to a focus on business and performance results" (Robinson &

Robinson, 2008, p. 171). You need to probe for the ultimate, measurable, business-related outcome behind the proposed training: *“Can you help me understand what is behind your request for training? If the training is successful, how will the business benefit? For example, will we experience fewer errors, greater speed, lower cost, or something like that?”*

The perceived need for training usually originates because management believes that something is not happening that should be (“the sales clerks are not asking customers about related supplies”) or that something is happening that should not be (“too many mistakes,” “inappropriate behavior,” and so forth). Your goal is to draw out the underlying perception and why it is a problem: the cost or lost opportunity for the organization.

A second common situation is for the initial answer to define the desired result, but in terms too general to be useful, for example, “We need to increase sales.” In this case, you need to probe for details, for the intermediate steps or aspects of the process that require attention: *“You have been very clear about the urgent need to increase sales. Can you say more about the specific aspects of the sales process that you feel we most need to address or improve?”*

2. What Will Participants Do Differently and Better?

This second question is designed to help identify the vital behaviors or actions needed to effect the desired results. The core concept is the quip often ascribed to Einstein: “One definition of insanity is to continue doing the same thing and expect a different result.” In other words, people have to do something in a different way to produce a different result: Just “knowing” or “understanding” is not enough. Participants have to put their new knowledge and skills to work in ways that are different, better, and more effective than what they were doing previously. The learning organization needs to know what the desired behaviors are in order to design effective instruction and help create a positive “transfer climate” (see D4) that supports those behaviors on the job.

Ask the client to describe the desired changes in behavior: *“If the training is a success, and we were to watch how people perform their jobs afterward, what would we see them doing that is different and better?”* Another useful approach is to ask about the behaviors of top performers: *“What do the top performers do that lesser performers don’t? If the training is successful, more people should do what the top performers do. What would that look like?”*

3. What or Who Could Confirm These Changes?

The goal of this third question is to start the dialogue about how to validate whether or not the training is producing the desired outcomes. The core concept is that the only way that learning organizations can succeed is if they know how

success is defined *by the customer*. The latter phrase is in italics because, as we will explain in greater detail in D6, it is the customer who ultimately decides whether the initiative was a success or failure. Engaging the customer (which, in business, usually means the department that is paying the bill) in a discussion of what *could* be measured facilitates the discussion of what *should* be measured and how success will be defined (Question 4, below). The right time to have those discussions is in the project definition phase since it affects everything else—from designing the complete experience (D2) to documenting the results (D6).

The initial discussion of Question 3 should be a shared brainstorming session. *“How can we be sure the training is working? That is, if we get the training and the transfer climate right, the participants’ performance should begin to improve. Who will notice these changes first? How can we find out whether people are really using what they learned? What else will change or be measurable?”*

You may need to “prime the pump” here by offering some suggestions to help your client think about potential outcomes and how they could be confirmed. Examples include:

- If we were to actually observe participants doing their jobs, would we be able to see the change? What would we look for?
- Who would notice a change as part of their normal interactions with the participants, for example, customers, managers, or direct reports? Who could we ask?
- Would any of the business metrics that we track routinely (sales, quality, customer satisfaction, and so forth) change? Which?

It turns out that while there are a very large number of potential outcomes, there are only a small number of *types* of outcomes and ways to assess them. Use Table D1.3 to help guide your brainstorming.

In the early stages of the conversation, the goal is to explore a number of options for measuring the outcome. However, sometimes the changes that the customer wants to see (for example, change in turnover) will take so long to become evident that the impact of training will be obscured by other factors. In such cases, encourage the client to help you identify “leading indicators.” Leading indicators are the earliest evidence that things are going in the right direction.

Your follow-up discussion might sound like this: *“We agreed at the beginning of our discussion that improving retention is a long-term business need and goal. The problem with relying solely on that to measure the impact of training is that we won’t see a significant change in retention rates for months. By then it will be hard to figure out whether it was the training or something else. What could we measure sooner that would give us an indication that the training is having the desired effect? A survey? Employee commitment scores? 360-degree feedback?”*

TABLE D1.3. MAJOR CATEGORIES OF POST-LEARNING OUTCOMES AND WAYS TO DOCUMENT THEM

Type of Outcome	Potential Data Sources	Potential Data Collection
Change in behavior	Participants themselves Participants' managers Customers Trained observers	Survey Interview Observation
Improved opinion by key stakeholders	Customers Direct reports Managers Others	Satisfaction survey Interviews Focus groups
Improved business metrics	Company IT system Independent tracking resource	Data extraction Data purchase
Improved work product	Samples of work	Expert review or observation

Identifying and assessing leading indicators is important to get an early read on whether the training is having the desired effect and to support continuous improvement of subsequent classes.

4. What Are the Specific Criteria of Success?

Once you have listed all the possible outcomes that *might* be measured, it is time to agree on what *will* be measured and when, and how much of a change is required to consider the program a success. It is vital to get agreement on the “conditions of satisfaction” *in advance* since these are the deliverables section of the contract between the learning organization and line management.

The discussion of Question 4 should be primarily a selection process, winnowing down the possible choices identified in Question 3 to the critical few. It should include a high-level discussion of how they will be measured; for example, will self reports suffice? Your goal is to come to agreement with the business leaders on the key outcomes and acceptable approaches to documenting results, not to develop a detailed evaluation plan—that is the work of D6.

For example, suppose that the ultimate business need is to reduce employee turnover, and that you and the sponsor have agreed (as the research shows) that a leading indicator of intent to stay is a good working relationship between the employee and his or her supervisor. For a management training program, then, you might define the specific measure of success as: “On a survey three months

after the program, at least half the direct reports of attendees agree that their relationship with their manager has improved.”

For other kinds of programs, the criterion for success might be a change in a tracked business metric (quality index, customer satisfaction, average sales), while for others, a manager’s evaluation of the participant’s performance might be an adequate measure of success. There is no one right answer. The goal of Question 4 is to come to agreement on what the program is supposed to achieve in terms that the customer considers relevant and credible and which the learning organization believes it can achieve given the resources available and the level of support for learning transfer.

Defining the criteria of success should be a “give and take” discussion. The learning organization should not blindly accept impossible targets—since sooner or later it will be called to account. While committing to specific levels of achievement may feel uncomfortable and foreign to learning professionals, it is, as Basarab (in press) points out, the norm in business. Sales leaders have to commit to achieving specific levels of sales, marketers to specific market share, CEOs to profitability and growth targets, heads of manufacturing to lower cost or higher quality. A known target allows the learning organization to optimize the learning experience and to implement continuous improvement. And, perhaps most important, a clear set of business outcomes from training enhances the credibility of the learning organization, earning it a real seat at the table and its long-sought goal of being embraced as a true business partner.

A clear set of business outcomes from training enhances the credibility of the learning organization.

Create Co-Ownership

Once the desired business outcomes have been clarified, there is one more critical question to discuss: *“Besides training, what else needs to be in place to achieve these results?”* This is a critical question to raise because training is never the whole answer. To get a lasting change in behavior requires coaching and encouragement from managers; support when people run into difficulties; and recognition and reward systems that are aligned with the desired actions.

As Mosel pointed out more than fifty years ago: “It is top management, through the organizational climate or reward structure it creates, that is *really* doing the training, regardless of what the training staff does. The training administered by the training staff ‘sticks’ only if it coincides with what top management is teaching every day” (Mosel, 1957, emphasis in original).

Use the final “what else” question to begin to educate the sponsor on the extent to which factors in addition to training (see D4: Drive Learning Transfer)

influence the success or failure of the effort. *“We can certainly teach people how and why these behaviors are important and we will put in place systems to support and document them. But what else needs to happen to support and encourage these behaviors on the job? I’m thinking about everything from coaching to tools to reward systems.”* Another useful way to help clients think about the post-training environment is to ask: *“What currently gets in the way of people performing in the desired fashion? What barriers can we reduce or eliminate to increase the probability of success?”*

Your goal is to help the sponsor realize that the business is co-responsible for the success or failure of any training initiative. You need them to commit, as their part of the “contract,” to creating a supportive transfer climate. Training needs clearly defined business outcomes to succeed, but it also requires a supportive environment and the cooperation of management.

Enforce Priorities

Once you begin to think proactively about the areas in which learning could contribute to the success of the business, you will discover many potential programs that could make a meaningful difference. By no means should all of these be pursued. Learning organizations—like other business functions—need to pick their targets carefully. No company has sufficient resources to pursue every market opportunity; no learning and development group can take on all the potential places in which performance could be improved through training.

The danger of trying to pursue too many opportunities simultaneously is that you under-resource all of them with the end result that none make a meaningful contribution. It is better to execute a small number of important initiatives well than to execute a large number badly. The general rule of thumb is that the more limited your resources, the more discriminating you must be, directing your efforts where they are likely to produce the greatest return.

Targeting your resources on opportunities that have the greatest potential necessarily means saying “no” to some requests. Learning organizations cannot—and should not—attempt to satisfy every training request or pursue every opportunity, especially when saddled with fixed or shrinking resources. There needs to be a rigorous and defensible basis for moving ahead with some opportunities and denying or delaying others. In this regard, a learning advisory council or steering committee can be very helpful:

Senior executives, from multiple business units and corporate functions, should regularly meet and provide input on what needs to be done (and win implicit buy-in in the process). They will help push programs through the approval and budgeting process and provide timely and accurate feedback

on program effectiveness. Educational programs will carry significant weight if they are supported by the advisory board and board support will increase the credibility of the entire executive education function. (Saslow, 2005, p. 45)

Three factors must be weighed in the prioritization process:

- *The upside potential.* This is the positive business impact that will be realized if the program achieves the business outcomes for which it was created.
- *The downside costs of killing or delaying a program.* These might include lost opportunity, adverse legal or regulatory exposure, inadequate leadership pipeline, and so forth.
- *The probability of success.* A program might well have significant potential upside, but if line management is unwilling to invest the time and resources necessary to create a favorable transfer climate, then the probability of achieving the projected results is low and the expected payback should be significantly discounted.

To help ensure that such factors are taken into consideration, some companies, such as Randstad, use a business unit sign-off form that prompts managers to think about the magnitude of the problem and the value of resolving it (Bersin, 2008b). One of our biopharmaceutical clients requires business units to force rank potential training opportunities in terms of their potential business value. Regardless of the specific mechanism used, the key is to have a process that involves business leaders in making sure that scarce training resources are focused on the highest-value opportunities.



Avoid Training Traps

The human development field is rife with traps for the unwary. In our consulting practice, we encounter too many learning organizations that have succumbed to one or more of the many potential pitfalls (Case in Point D1.4). Some of the most common pitfalls are listed below, with suggestions on how to avoid them, because nothing is more tragic than to have designers, facilitators, and technicians pour their energy and creativity into a program that doesn't lead to valued results. It's what Peterson and Nielsen call "fake work" and it is tragic because it is just as hard as real work and because it consumes time, resources, and people's careers, even though it doesn't actually advance the organization's mission (Peterson & Nielsen, 2009, p. 4).

Case in Point D1.4 Detailed Roadmap to Unclear Destination

A major corporation consulted us about how they could increase the impact of a soon-to-be-launched management development program.

We started through the Outcomes Planning Wheel. We asked: “What’s the driving business issue? How will the company benefit by having someone attend the program? What will participants do better and differently as a consequence of attending?”

There was an awkward silence.

The chief of learning turned to the program director. The program director deferred to the instructional designer. “That’s a good question,” they all said. But no one had the answer.

They had a detailed plan—practically to the minute—of what was going to happen during the course. They knew which leadership models they were going to use. They had purchased a custom simulation and hired big-name speakers. They had a list of learning objectives—what knowledge participants would acquire—but no one could explain how these were linked to the business of the business. They were about to launch the program to hundreds of mid- and upper-level managers, but no one responsible for putting it together could explain the key business drivers or how attendance would increase productivity, generate new revenue, or otherwise create value for the company.

This was a very smart, dedicated, hard-working, professional, and talented team, yet they had fallen into the trap of focusing so hard on the “how” that they had lost sight of the “why.” Their experience suggests just how easy this is to do and why learning and line leaders alike must keep coming back to the business rationale and define the intended outcomes in business terms.

How can such a thing happen? Why do even savvy learning organizations get off track? Our experience suggests that there are five key training traps that must be avoided:

- Training as cure-all
- Having a program to have a program
- Confusion between means and ends
- Laudable intent
- Inadequate input

Training as Cure-All

Not every performance problem is amenable to training. One of the most common reasons that training fails to deliver satisfactory results is that the problem

being addressed was not one that could be solved by training in the first place (Phillips & Phillips, 2002).

If the productivity of customer support personnel is low, for example, because the computer system they use is slow and unreliable, no amount of training will noticeably improve the situation; better results will be achieved by expending resources to upgrade the software, equipment, or both. If, on the other hand, productivity is low because support personnel do not know how to use the software efficiently or take advantage of shortcuts, then the right training with the right performance support will produce significant improvement.

Unfortunately, many managers' knee-jerk reaction to any performance issue is "We need a training program," without really analyzing the root causes of the problem. Any number of deficiencies can result in suboptimal performance; training can only address performance issues related to a lack of skills or knowledge (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2004, p. 11). Mager and Pipe (1997) suggested that the acid test is: "Could they do it if their lives depended on it?" If the answer is yes, "then you can forget training as a potential solution. After all, 'teaching' people what they already know how to do isn't going to affect the performance discrepancy" (p. 93).

If people know how to do something correctly, but they aren't, then their poor performance stems from a lack of motivation, unclear expectations, insufficient feedback, or other managerial or systems failures (Exhibit D1.3) and training is not the solution. Learning professionals, in their roles as performance consultants, need to be sure that they have investigated and eliminated other causes of poor performance first. "Training is expensive to design and deliver; it should be the *last*, not the *first*, intervention the HRD professional and the organization should consider in order to improve employee performance" (Broad & Newstrom, 1992, p. 5). Nothing is more demoralizing to the learning organization, more frustrating to participants, or more damaging to learning's reputation than to take on a training assignment that is doomed to failure because the real problem is a breakdown in management or systems.

We have become increasingly concerned about the misuse of training to try to solve all manner of unrelated performance problems; it is giving learning a black eye. In our workshops, we ask learning professionals what percent of their programs fail because training was not the right solution to the problem. Estimates are consistently 10 to 25 percent, and in one company, 40 percent. That suggests that somewhere between one-tenth and one-quarter of all training programs are doomed to failure because the real issues have not been identified or addressed. Training is being used as a sop by management to give the appearance that something is being done. No wonder there is often cynicism about the effectiveness of training. Workplace learning professionals must not let themselves be used as patsies.

Exhibit D1.3

Causes of Poor Performance That Can Be Solved Without Training

UNCLEAR EXPECTATIONS

- ❑ If employees do not know exactly what is expected of them, make sure performance standards are made clear. Suboptimal performance is often due simply to inadequate understanding of what is wanted.

LACK OF FEEDBACK

- ❑ If employees have not received unambiguous feedback on their current performance, see that they get it. Training is sometimes used to avoid providing direct feedback on sub-par performance. Even if people understand what is expected, they need feedback on their performance in order to improve it.

LACK OF INCENTIVE

- ❑ If there is no positive recognition or reward for doing things right, see that there is. Training cannot solve a motivation problem. Being recognized for a job well done is a powerful motivator. Yet an astounding number of employees say they have not received any positive feedback for months on end.

LACK OF CONSEQUENCES

- ❑ If there aren't currently any negative consequences for not performing, make sure there are. If there are no consequences for not performing in the desired fashion, most people will take the path of least resistance, and attempting to train them to do otherwise is a fool's errand. One poor learning professional in one of our workshops had been asked to put together a half-day program on hardhat safety because workers were not wearing their hardhats on the job site. We asked what happened if they were on site without a hardhat. The answer was "nothing"—which was the problem—not a lack of knowledge or skill.

INADEQUATE TOOLS, NO ACCESS TO NEEDED INFORMATION, OVERLY COMPLICATED PROCESSES, AND SO FORTH

- ❑ If there are other obstacles to satisfactory performance—such as inadequate tools or insufficient access to information—these have to be addressed directly; they cannot be resolved by training. Use training only to address issues stemming from inadequate knowledge or skills that cannot be solved by simple job aids or other performance support.

So what do you do when you are asked to create a training program when you know that training is not the right solution to the problem? You follow Stolovitch's advice and say immediately, "I can help you solve your problem" (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2004, p. 16). Because you can, even though it won't be by providing training. Indeed, if you can show, through skillful questioning and analysis, that the problem is not a lack of knowledge or skills—and therefore one that can be solved more effectively and less expensively with a non-training solution—you have helped your client, the company, and the learning organization a great deal. If, on the other hand, the first words out of your mouth are, "I am not sure that training is the right solution," you may be right, but you may be seen as negative and uncooperative, and the manager may just go hire a training vendor to provide the wrong solution anyway. You will have missed an opportunity to educate your client and to help your organization and yourself.

Even when training clearly *is* part of the solution, it is never *all* of the solution.

Remember that even when training clearly *is* part of the solution, it is never *all* of the solution. In the next chapter (D2), we will consider the criticality of designing the *complete* experience, which includes all four phases of learning, together with the performance support systems and environmental factors that determine whether or not a program delivers its objectives. Because learning and development is increasingly being held accountable for demonstrating meaningful business impact, learning organizations must become adept at avoiding assignments for which training is not the answer.

We Need a Program

When the main purpose of having a program is "to have a program," the initiative is in trouble from the start. This problem typically begins when someone in upper management decrees that the company needs to have a program on something or other (see Figure D1.7).

That isn't itself a problem when the impetus is a real business need that can be addressed by training, such as insufficient skills in marketing, leadership, or sales. But programs also spring from causes that are less results-driven, such as the need to "have some training" as part of a meeting, a business book extolling the latest theory, a consultant, a conference, a competitor's program (especially if it attracted media attention), or a pointed question from the board ("What are you doing to accelerate innovation?").

Whatever the inciting event, the assignment is passed down the line as, "The boss wants us to put together a program on X." Well-meaning subordinates

FIGURE D1.7. TRAINING TRAP 2: WE NEED A PROGRAM

“Quick, we need a leadership development program that I can announce to the Board of Directors’ meeting on Friday.”

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scramble to fill the order. Experts are consulted; vendors are vetted; models and theories are debated. After the expenditure of much time and energy, a “custom” curriculum is designed; logistics are planned; speakers are hired. The only detail that has been overlooked is the business driver: What results are expected beyond “having a program?” How will “having a program” benefit the business? What outcomes are we trying to achieve?

It is very easy, especially in large organizations, for the program—which usually means “the event”—to become an end in itself. When this happens, success becomes defined as the number of attendees and the scores on end-of-event evaluations. But neither of these drive the organization forward nor justify the cost.

The higher in the organization that the idea for the program originated, the less likely that it will be challenged. “Having a program” will become an unquestioned organizational imperative. Jack Welch is reported to have said that one of the problems with being CEO is that “You ask for a cup of coffee and they go out and buy Colombia.” If the CEO wants a program, what human resources or organizational development staff member is going to have the temerity to ask: “Why?” or “What’s the payoff for the company?” Yet those are exactly the kinds of questions that must be asked if learning and development is going to succeed.

Susan Burnett, senior vice president for talent and organizational development at Yahoo!, told the story of being interviewed at The Gap: “When I was being interviewed, the CEO said, ‘I want Merchant University.’ And I said, ‘Why?’ If I had not had that conversation, I would not have known.” (See Case in Point D1.5.)

Case in Point D1.5 Good News, Bad News

When Susan Burnett became senior vice president of talent and development for Gap, Inc., she got some good news. “I came in on the day they were finalizing the budget and sat down with my new boss. She showed me the budget and she said, ‘Hey, I have some good news for you. The learning team got \$6 million in incremental funds to produce Merchant University, Design Academy, and a new on-boarding process.’ I said, ‘OK, cool, six million dollars, that is great. But why does the business need these programs? What business results are we supposed to produce for Gap, Inc?’

“And so I interviewed people, talked to managers. I am voraciously interested in how the business works and how we make money—always have been. It comes from years of line management. So here was the perfect opportunity. I was a new leader, in a new business, and I needed to really understand the drivers for success.

“I learned about Gap’s business strategies for growth, operations, and people. As I talked with the executive team and their leadership teams, I learned that Gap’s transformation would come from building new leadership capabilities in our people and new organizational capabilities in product development, supply chain, and IT. I learned that the merchant job was central to our brand’s success, and that Gap had invented the role of the merchant in the late 1980s, evolving from buyer to merchant leader. I also saw that the current reengineering of the product pipeline would require the reinvention of the merchant role again. And I learned that turnover of our new employees and our key merchant talent was unacceptable.

“I was excited that my learning organization would have the opportunity to make a big difference in achieving Gap’s business objectives. We could stem the new employee turnover tide with an awesome hiring-to-on-boarding process that improved productivity and performance in the first ninety days. We could accelerate understanding of the new merchant role, the new concept to customer pipeline, and build the new merchant general management capabilities desperately needed by our business.”

But then she discovered the bad news. The learning team was not connected to the priorities of the business. They were working hard to produce legacy programs, but they were not working on the real business issues. They were not connected to the business strategies and core changes the new leadership was driving.

As a result, “I got a proposal for Merchant U that wasn’t connected to the transformation the business needed for success. I also saw that my team didn’t have the critical business relationships and connections that would get them the information they needed. It was a recipe for failure.”

The stronger the command-and-control culture of a company, the more likely everyone will exert best efforts to fulfill a program request without ever stopping to ask, “Why?” The result will be a learning initiative that lacks grassroots support because there is no clear line of sight to the mission and goals of the business. Line managers will grumble among themselves about the cost or wasted time, but most will go along with it in order to save their powder for bigger battles. A conspiracy of silence develops; the discussions of the program will all take place in what Connolly and Rianoshek (2002) call “pretense” mode—everyone saying the right things but no one addressing the real concerns. And the poor learning organization—having done its best to fulfill what it thought it was asked to do—will not understand why its contribution is not valued as highly as the management rhetoric suggested.

Programs created for the sole sake of “having a program” are doomed. The antidote is to establish D1 as a guiding principle across the organization: No program, regardless of who requests it, will be executed without a clear rationale based on expected business outcomes. That will help create a climate in which it is normal to question the business justification for every proposed program and in which only those initiatives for which there is a compelling business need are executed.

Confusing Means and Ends

Just as “having a program” is inadequate as a rationale, “having given a program” is inadequate as an outcome. Many corporate learning organizations still report the number of people taught, hours of instruction, the number of e-learning courses completed, and so forth as if they were results.

Learning management systems have contributed to the problem by making it easier to collect, generate, slice, and dice such data and turn them into PowerPoint slides and graphs. But such statistics are measures of activity, not productivity. They are measures of inputs, not outputs. The well-known human resources consultant Dave Ulrich related a meeting he had with the chairman and top human resources leaders from a large bank. “The training person said that 80 percent of employees have done at least forty hours in classes. The chairman said, ‘Congratulations.’ I said, ‘You’re talking about the activities you’re doing. The question is: What are you delivering?’” (quoted in Hammonds, 2005).

The true goal of learning and development—and the standard against which it will increasingly be measured—is the extent to which it contributes to a company’s prosperity and competitiveness. The activities involved—courses, hours, instructors, coaching, podcasts, blog entries, and all the rest—are the means to an end, not the end itself. They are important for the learning organization

to track for the internal management of the function, but they are not the business outcomes for which the unit was created and funded.

Confusing means with ends is hardly peculiar to learning and development. In any initiative, it is easy to become so focused on activities that the original purpose is lost. That is, “having lost sight of our objectives, we redoubled our efforts.” Activities are seductive; they are observable, quantifiable, and easy to measure, graph, and report. But they do not equate to value added.

Writing about corporate change initiatives, Schaffer and Thomson (1992) said: “At the heart of these programs, which we call ‘activity centered,’ is a fundamentally flawed logic that confuses ends with means, process with outcomes.” A focus on activity rather than results leads to a situation in which “The performance improvement efforts of many companies have as much impact on operational and financial results as a ceremonial rain dance has on the weather” (p. 2).

The fault is management’s, or, as the comics character Pogo said: “We have met the enemy and he is us.” For years, learning and development organizations have been treated as pure cost centers rather than contributors to productivity. The result has been undue emphasis on efficiency (cost containment) rather than efficacy (cost benefit), on activity (programs or hours of training) as opposed to results (increased sales, greater efficiency, better leadership, more effective marketing, higher quality service, and so forth). Training departments, consultants, and vendors do not promise specific results because, historically, they haven’t been required to. As long as companies are willing to pay for activity, only a fool would offer more.

This is in stark contrast to the standards for line departments. If a sales manager requests funds to increase the size of the sales force, she must be able to demonstrate how this will be translated into more sales, not merely more sales calls. A sales manager is measured and rewarded for achieving the promised increase in revenue, not merely for increasing the size of the sales force. Similarly, if the head of manufacturing requests funds to retool a plant, he had better be able to justify the investment in terms of increased productivity, lower costs, higher quality, and so forth; and he had better deliver on those promises. That is the way business works; activity alone is not rewarded.

Teresa Roche, CLO for Agilent Technologies, understands this. Together with the prestige of being asked by the CEO to lead a high-profile, transformational leadership program came increased pressure and accountability for producing results. Roche said she welcomes the scrutiny. “If I’m going to be given something to work on and somebody is investing dollars and I’m being held to account to that, I wouldn’t want it any other way,” she said (quoted in Prokopeak, 2009).

Practicing D1 and D6 religiously—requiring that business outcomes be specified for every program and then documenting them—will allow learning

organizations to avoid the means versus ends pitfall. Doing so ensures that learning organizations are subjected to the same rigorous scrutiny to which a well-run business subjects its line operations, and that they are recognized and rewarded for producing results. It is a manifest disservice to both learning professionals and shareholders to apply a lower standard to evaluate educational programs than is applied to other business processes.

Laudable Intent

A fourth pitfall for learning organizations is programs that are positioned on the moral high ground. Challenging the value of a diversity, safety training, or leadership development program is akin to questioning the value of motherhood, patriotism, or equality. Managers who value their careers are reluctant to challenge politically correct programs that have laudable intent.

The result is that learning and development initiatives on such topics are rarely subjected to the same kind of rigorous review and debate as other expenditures of comparable magnitude. Marketing plans, for example, are closely scrutinized and frequently challenged. The debate about a marketing program is not about whether it is good or necessary to do marketing, but rather about whether the proposed plan is the best possible approach and whether it is likely to deliver the promised results.

There should be equally candid discussions about learning programs in leadership, diversity, total quality, or other areas of laudable intent. Such debate should not be about the merit of such ideals, which is a given, but should rigorously explore how well the program serves or will serve the organization and whether the approach is likely to produce the desired outcomes. If a program is not producing the desired results—no matter how politically correct or laudable—it should be scrapped and replaced (see Case in Point D1.6). Learning organizations that practice D1—keeping the focus always on the desired business outcomes—encourage discussion about the organizational goals for *every* program and the best means of achieving them.

Inadequate Input

We continue to be surprised by the number of major learning programs that are implemented without adequate input in otherwise well-managed companies. Some are developed entirely within the human resource or training organization and are put into practice with little or no input from line leaders. While it is true that human resources, organizational development, and learning organizations have deep expertise in their respective disciplines, they are not the consumers of

Case in Point D1.6 It's Your Ship

When Captain Michael Abrashoff took command of the *USS Benfold*, one of his early actions was to cancel the diversity training program—not because he did not believe that diversity was critical to the success of the Navy, but because the current program was not achieving the outcomes for which it was intended: reducing racial tensions and sexual discrimination and improving teamwork.

Because he was focused on the business outcomes, he wasn't content just to have a program that everyone attended. When it was clear that the program wasn't producing the required results, he eliminated it. "I could have been fired for that, but in my view it was common sense that a program that produced such awful results was clearly ineffective. I had no intention of allowing anything ineffective on *Benfold*" (Abrashoff, 2002, p. 170).

Instead, he replaced it with something more effective. A program should not be exempt from having to deliver results just because it has high ideals and laudable intent; indeed, because their inherent merit is so great, such programs should probably receive *increased* scrutiny to be sure they are achieving their lofty goals.

the program, nor are they directly accountable for the bottom line. Their perspective on the business is different from that of line leaders; they have less hands-on experience managing hard business metrics. If they consult only among themselves, they may design a program with strong learning objectives but only weak links to the essential business outcomes.

Equally dangerous is relying on only a single source of information about the performance gaps and their causes. The Outcomes Planning Wheel (Figure D1.6) we provided has proven useful in facilitating discussions with business managers about performance needs and the outcomes desired. We do not mean to imply, however, that you should rely on just one point of view. A manager's perspective is different than that of the people who actually do the work. The Robinsons (2008, p. 80) recommend consulting a minimum of two different sources for information such as employees, managers, customers, business documents, or operational data. The success of training—or any other intervention, for that matter—depends on truly understanding the problem you are trying to solve. It is therefore vital to invest the time and effort to gather the data you need to gain a comprehensive view of the business outcomes sought and the skills and behaviors required to achieve them.

The payoff is that programs that are clearly linked to business strategies will enjoy strong support from senior line leaders and earn the learning organization a true "seat at the table" (see Case in Point D1.7).

Case in Point D1.7 Linking Learning and Strategy

Plastipak Packaging is a global, \$2 billion manufacturer of rigid plastic containers. Driven by the goal of enabling company leaders to manage the challenges and opportunities of rapid growth, the company launched Plastipak Academy in 2006. Its mission: deliver targeted learning solutions aligned with current business needs, equipping leaders enterprise-wide to grow the business.

To change the paradigm about the role of learning, Academy leader Diane Hinton and her team have worked hard to hold conversations with senior managers that differ from what they typically expect from a learning unit. The goal is to ensure that learning at Plastipak is driven by business needs and strategy.

As she explained: “We ask about their business challenges—not their training needs—to identify strategic priorities. For example, to jumpstart our needs assessment process, Mary Singos interviewed our company’s top twenty-six leaders about their business challenges during one-hour, one-on-one, gut-level conversations. She crystallized each dialog into need statements that the leader checked for accuracy and rated on business impact and priority.

“We then compiled and presented the analysis—or the ‘voice of our leaders’—as a total picture of organizational needs and threats to each member of the executive steering team, one-on-one. With the executives’ guidance on priorities, we developed learning proposals for the top four business challenges that emerged. We solicited sponsorship from the executive(s) who ‘owned’ them. And in one case, we were able to forge a collaborative partnership between two executives who shared a similar challenge, but who previously held very different views on the solution.

“The result is that we have moved the learning dialog from ‘training needs’ to ‘business needs.’ That has enabled us to establish a governance structure with executives who now collaborate to identify, set, and fund priorities.

“Top leaders increasingly approach us or refer others to us to help them meet their pressing business needs. Our reputation for proactively doing the right things and doing them well has earned us a true ‘seat at the table.’

“For example, William C. Young, our president and CEO, requested that I be present during the annual corporate strategy meeting because, as he said, ‘I want the Academy to play an integral role in communicating and driving these changes.’ Mr. Young openly expresses the opinion that Plastipak Academy is a strategic lever bringing competitive advantage.”

That is the kind of recognition to which all learning organizations should strive, but one that can only be earned by being business outcomes driven.

The International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI) has defined human performance technology (HPT) as a systematic approach to solve practical problems of performance by the individuals and groups in organizations. The Society's governing principles reinforce the importance of getting sufficient input to clearly define desired outcomes and performance gaps before designing interventions. The principles include:

- A focus on outcomes
- A systematic approach to the assessment of the need or opportunity
- A systematic analysis of the work and workplace to identify the cause of factors that limit performance

The HPT process begins with a comparison of the present and the desired levels of individual and organizational performance to identify the performance gap. A cause analysis is then done to determine what impact the work environment (information, resources, and incentives) and the people are having on performance. Once the performance gap and the causes have been determined, the appropriate interventions are designed and developed. (International Society for Performance Improvement, n.d.)

One way to ensure adequate input is to create a steering committee that includes both business and learning leaders to provide oversight and insight. Bersin (2008a) identified "alignment with the business strategy" as one of the six practices of highly effective development. At BNY Mellon, the top ten executives meet quarterly to review how leadership development is supporting the company's business initiatives (Bersin, 2008a). At Sony, senior business leaders serve on Sony's Talent Management Council, which helps design and evaluate Sony's Integrated Leadership Curriculum. An executive from the council also attends the virtual wrap-up session in which participants report the business impact of working on their leadership goals. Many companies use senior leaders as instructors in strategic programs. Involving senior leadership in forging the strategy and also in the rollout ensures that the program has legitimacy and remains focused on business outcomes.



Manage Expectations

Expectations matter. When you buy a product, you do so expecting certain benefits. As the saying goes: "People do not buy quarter-inch drills; they buy the expectation of quarter-inch holes." Whether or not buyers are satisfied with their

purchases depends on whether or not their expectations were met. The same applies to training and development. Management doesn't (or shouldn't) buy courses; they buy the expectation of improved performance. Therefore, learning

Management doesn't buy courses; they buy the expectation of improved performance.

organizations need to be mindful of, and manage, the expectations of their customers to ensure that they are in line with what can be realistically delivered. Indeed, the Kirkpatricks have proposed that "return on expectations" is the ultimate measure of training effectiveness (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2009, p. 89).

Those who decide how much to invest in learning and development do so based on their anticipation of the value it will deliver: The greater the investment of time and money required, the higher the expectation. The higher the expectation, the more compelling the evidence of value created will need to be for the purchasers to feel they have gotten their money's worth. Think about your own behavior: Your expectations of a \$49 entrée are different than they are for a \$9 one. You would hold the former to a much higher standard than the latter, would you not?

The challenge for learning and development—as for anyone selling a product or service—is to promise enough to get the order, but not so much that it cannot be delivered. And the only way to find the right balance is to agree in advance on the expected business outcomes and definition of success.

Better Than Nothing

As odd as it sounds, training programs have to be better than nothing. That's because companies can choose to do nothing—not to invest, either because the cost of resolving the problem exceeds the expected benefit or because they have lost confidence in training's ability to deliver meaningful business results. Learning and development organizations must demonstrate that they deliver substantially more value than no training at all. If they don't, then "no training at all" will continue to be the option of choice in times of fiscal restraint (see Case in Point D1.8).

So the final reason to always define business outcomes is to make it clear to management that investing in training and development is better than doing nothing.

Case in Point D1.8 No Evidence, No Funding

When Nigel Paine took over as the director of training for the BBC, he discovered that the company was investing £1.5 million a year in executive education of one sort or another (Paine, 2003). But when he searched all the available records, he could find no evidence of a return on the investment. People who attended such programs did not necessarily advance more quickly, stay with the firm longer, or generate more business value. There seemed to be no rationale for why some employees were sent to training programs and others were not, no explicit expectations of what would be gained, no follow-through. Therefore, he placed a moratorium on all spending for executive education. Needless to say, there was a great hue and cry among providers, both internal and external. But when challenged, no one could present credible evidence that their solution provided more value than the alternative—doing nothing.

One and a half million pounds is real money, even for an organization the size of the BBC. An investment of that magnitude will and should be scrutinized. Management has a fiduciary responsibility to be sure that an investment in learning and development is the best possible use of the money and that the resources could not be more profitably deployed elsewhere.

This is a key point with respect to the first discipline of defining outcomes: Learning and development programs compete for resources not only with alternative educational providers and formats, but also with other departments and other uses for the money. Canceling a £1.5 million expenditure, for example, drops £1.5 million straight to the bottom line. Learning and development leaders need to show, credibly and compellingly, why shareholders are better served by investing money in learning and development rather than reporting it as profit and paying it out as dividends. In short, they need to show why training (which is expensive) is better than doing nothing (which, at least from a cost point-of-view, is free).



Summary

The first, crucial, and frequently overlooked step in successful learning and development is to define the desired outcomes in business terms. Successful learning organizations prioritize the business needs that training can address and concentrate their resources on those that will have the greatest impact and probability of success. In collaboration with the key stakeholders, they define the rationale for the program in terms of the business outcomes to be delivered, not just the learning objectives to be achieved. They agree with the sponsors on the measures

of success before they design the complete program. This first critical discipline—defining business outcomes—is the keystone for the success of the entire training initiative. If program designers fail to clearly articulate the desired business outcomes, no amount of effort in subsequent stages can fully compensate; the future of the program, and perhaps the company itself, is put at risk.

Use the checklist for D1 to ensure that training is the best solution and that the objectives for the training and development are stated as business outcomes.

CHECKLIST FOR D1

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Criterion
The Overall Program	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposed training and development address a performance issue related to lack of knowledge or skill.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-training solutions have been explored or tried and rejected.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Environmental factors that will affect successful implementation (such as accountability, consequences, coaching, etc.) have been identified and discussed.
Each Program Objective	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is clearly linked to a high-priority, high-value business need or opportunity.
<input type="checkbox"/>	States the actual performance that will be achieved (as opposed to knowledge, ability, or capability).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Specifies to what extent this performance standard will be met and by when.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Uses business terms, concepts, and language.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clearly indicates how success could be measured.



Action Points

For Learning Leaders

- Never offer a program simply because you were asked to offer a program.
- Always ask, “Why? What is the expected benefit to the company?”
 - This is vital: If you do not clearly understand the business need and the linkage between the training and filling the need, you cannot design an effective intervention.
- Stand your ground when you believe training is the wrong solution.
 - Be a performance consultant; use the power of your expertise to help managers see there are better alternatives for achieving the desired result.
- Read and understand the business plan. Be proactive in identifying areas in which learning and development could contribute.
- Test your ideas with discerning line leaders. Make them your allies.

- Once you have decided to address an appropriate need with training, use the Outcomes Planning Wheel to help negotiate a clear “contract” with management that specifies in advance the objectives, methods, and how success will be determined.
 - Create co-ownership of results by helping managers understand that training will fail unless accompanied by concomitant changes in systems, managerial engagement, incentives, and so forth.
- Review all the programs for which you are responsible to be sure each has objectives that are credibly linked to business imperatives.
- Be proactive in managing the training portfolio.
 - Replace marginal programs with more strategic ones.
 - Propose to management realignment or even reduction of resources if appropriate.

For Line Leaders

- Review the key learning and development initiatives in the business unit for which you are responsible.
 - Are they clearly aligned with the most pressing needs of the business?
 - Are there critical needs that are not being addressed?
 - Are resources being spent on low-value programs that could be profitably redirected to higher-value initiatives?
- If you conclude that the current learning and development initiatives are not aligned with the most important needs of your business, you and the learning leader share the responsibility for ensuring that they are.
- Write down the business need that you would really like to see learning and development address and the results you want.
 - Then schedule a discussion with the head of learning and development.
 - Ask whether it is possible to address your needs with training. (Keep in mind that many performance issues in business are the result of systems or process problems that cannot be solved by training or that can be solved more quickly and less expensively in other ways. If the head of your learning organization is any good, he or she will tell you whether it is realistic to try to achieve the results you want through training.)
- Work through the Outcomes Planning Wheel (Figure D1.6) with your learning and development partner.
 - Agree on the behavioral changes that are needed to achieve your objective and how they can be confirmed.
- Ask learning and development to propose a plan for achieving these results.
 - Review it critically, using the 6Ds Scorecard (Exhibit I.1).
- If appropriate, rebalance your learning and development portfolio to redirect resources to the initiatives with the greatest potential payoff.

