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RESEARCH ARTICLE

BENCHMARKING TOOLS FOR TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS AND SUGGESTING THE BEST PRACTICES IN A LEADING CONGLOMERATE IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Training presents a prime opportunity to expand the knowledge base of all employees, but many employers find the development opportunities expensive. Employees also miss out on work time while attending training sessions, which may delay the completion of projects. Despite the potential drawbacks, training and development provides both the company as a whole and the individual employees with benefits that make the cost and time a worthwhile investment. Statistics prove that companies across the globe invest heavily on employee training and development. According to Training Industry magazine, employee training and education spends in the India alone are growing incrementally by 14% every year. In addition to enhancing knowledge and skills, measuring training effectiveness has proven to be an important tool to boost employee engagement and retention. Results and measurements of past training also act as critical indicators while planning future workshops. Organizations should ensure that employees can demonstrate a positive impact of training through improved productivity and overall skill development. With the growing focus on continual learning and development, businesses are keen on identifying reliable metrics and methods to measure the effectiveness and the ROI of such employee training initiatives. After all, you would not want to deliver training that does not provide expected results. For this purpose, a list of tools was prepared that are being practiced worldwide and also a list of competitor companies. A survey was conducted through questionnaire and telephonic interviews in order to gain inputs from the companies about what are the tools adopted in their company and what is its success factor. Further, it was matched with the tools being adopted in this company and tried to understand the gaps. Finally, certain suggestions and recommendations were given to the company with suitable reasons as to what are the tools that could further be adopted based on its success factors. Also, the blueprints of some of the tools were designed and suggested to the company so that the company's overall functioning of training and its effectiveness could be improved. Need for training effectiveness was thus taken care of through this project and was of greater use to the company.

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INTRODUCTION

The need of the research arises because there is partial understanding of tools available for training effectiveness externally. The company needed to have data-based research of tools from the best in class companies to be inculcated in their system. The Gap between internal and external practices needed to be filled. The research explored the Kirkpatrick model which is the most applied model for measuring training effectiveness. During the 1950s, University of Wisconsin Professor Donald Kirkpatrick developed the Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model for evaluating training. With a simple, 4-level approach, this is one of the most successful models that helps you measure the effectiveness of customized corporate training program. Here are the four levels of measurement and the key indicators to look for at each level.

Level 1 – Reaction: This level measures how learners have reacted to the training, the relevance and usefulness of the training. Use surveys, questionnaires or talk to learners before and after the course to collect their feedback on the learning experience

Level 2 – Learning: Measure the knowledge and skills gained by learners as a result of the training. To measure this level, you can use a combination of metrics. At this stage of evaluation, you will be able to determine if the training is meeting its set objectives, what are the specific skills that can be developed with this training, and the scope for improvements in content and method of delivery.

Level 3 – Behavior: Understand how the training has impacted the learner's performance and attitude at work. Evaluate how the training has influenced the learner's

performance and delivery at work by using a combination of methods.

Level 4 – Results: Measure the tangible results of the training such as reduced cost, improved quality, faster project completion, increased productivity, employee retention, better marketing leads, increased sales, and higher morale

Objective of the study

- To identify and analyze the parameters and measure of success in our company with respect to the method and tools being used in other companies for training effectiveness
- To understand the gap and suggest the best practices that bring about a positive change in the company

Literature Review

The theoretical framework encapsulates the reviewed theories which will form the basis of the study. The empirical studies were reviewed in line with the study objectives and were conceptualized into a framework. Even though evaluation is listed at the last phase, evaluation actually happens during all the phases. It is used during the training process to evaluate the training process itself. Evaluation is not just for the trainer or organization it is absolutely important for the learner too. The purpose of this paper is to provide information to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of training. One new model was found namely Back planning model. Which is same as Kirkpatrick's model but the process occurs in the reverse order and continues in a cyclic process.

Key Elements of Training Program Effectiveness

1. Training environment
2. Training Design and Development
3. Training Delivery
4. Training Implementation
5. Training Evaluation

Training Implementation

This is in fact a critical step in getting the resources allocated by the management in an effective manner. It addresses some activities and methods which ensures that training to be developed for better performance of the employee.

The various methods of training evaluation are:

- Observation
- Questionnaire
- Interview

Kirkpatrick's Four – Level Training Evaluation Model

This is the best method for evaluating the training effectiveness and widely accepted and followed by many organizations. Kirkpatrick's Training Evaluation Model consists of Four-Levels. According to this model evaluation should always start from the basic level and further evaluation of other levels would be done basing on the need for the situation. The four levels include:

Reaction - This determines how the reaction of the trainees during the training process.

Learning - the extent to which the learners gain knowledge and skills.

Behavior - capability to perform the learned skills while on the job.

Results - includes such items as monetary, efficiency, moral, etc

Level 1: Reaction

This level measures how your trainees (the people being trained), reacted to the training. Obviously, you want them to feel that the training was a valuable experience, and you want them to feel good about the instructor, the topic, the material, its presentation, and the venue. It's important to measure reaction, because it helps you understand how well the training was received by your audience. It also helps you improve the training for future trainees, including identifying important areas or topics that are missing from the training.

Level 2: Learning

At level 2, you measure what your trainees have learned. How much has their knowledge increased as a result of the training?

When you planned the training session, you hopefully started with a list of specific learning objectives: these should be the starting point for your measurement. Keep in mind that you can measure learning in different ways depending on these objectives, and depending on whether you're interested in changes to knowledge, skills, or attitude.

Level 3: Behavior

At this level, you evaluate how far your trainees have changed their behavior, based on the training they received. Specifically, this looks at how trainees apply the information. It's important to realize that behavior can only change if conditions are favorable. For instance, imagine you've skipped measurement at the first two Kirkpatrick levels and, when looking at your group's behavior, you determine that no behavior change has taken place. Therefore, you assume that your trainees haven't learned anything and that the training was ineffective.

Level 4: Results

At this level, you analyze the final results of your training. This includes outcomes that you or your organization have determined to be good for business, good for the employees, or good for the bottom line. Of all the levels, measuring the final results of the training is likely to be the costliest and time-consuming. The biggest challenges are identifying which outcomes, benefits, or final results are most closely linked to the training and coming up with an effective way to measure these outcomes over the long term.

Here are some outcomes to consider, depending on the objectives of your training:

- Increased employee retention.
- Increased production.
- Higher morale.

MATERIALS AND MEHTODS

Survey analysis: A field of applied statistics of human research surveys, survey methodology studies the sampling of individual units from a population and the associated survey data collection techniques, such as questionnaire construction and methods for improving the number and accuracy of responses to surveys. Survey methodology includes instruments or procedures that ask one or more questions that may, or may not, be answered.

Problem Identified: There is partial understanding of tools available for training effectiveness externally. The company needed to have data-based research of tools from the best in class companies to be inculcated in their system. The Gap between internal and external practices needed to be filled.

Type of Research:

Exploratory Research, Descriptive Research

Exploratory research is one which aims at providing insights into and an understanding of the problem faced by the researcher. Descriptive research, on the other hand, aims at describing something, mainly functions and characteristics

Sample size: Sample size for the purpose of survey analysis was limited to 30 companies

Technique of sampling

- Questionnaire.
- Telephonic Interviews.

Limitations

- Sample is limited to 30 companies.
- Data is based on responses of not more than 2 or 3 heads from each company.

ANALYSIS

Internal understanding of the company

| Employee Satisfaction | Knowledge/ Skills Learnt |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Immediate Feedback | 1. Quizzes |
| Workplace Application | 2. Pre/Post Learning Tests |
| 1. Competency based assessment type | Meeting goals and Objectives |
| Of Pre/ Post Testing | 1. Action Learning Projects |
| 2. Coaching | 2. Mentoring |

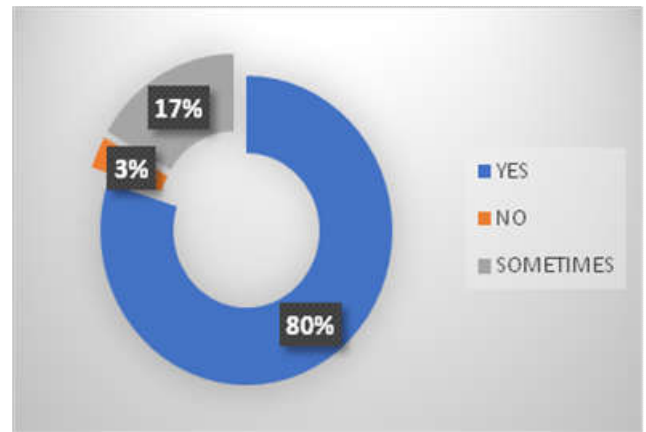
External analysis and interpretation

The table shows the distribution of responses given by the T&D experts in 30 companies surveyed over these asked questions:

Application of Training Needs taken from employees

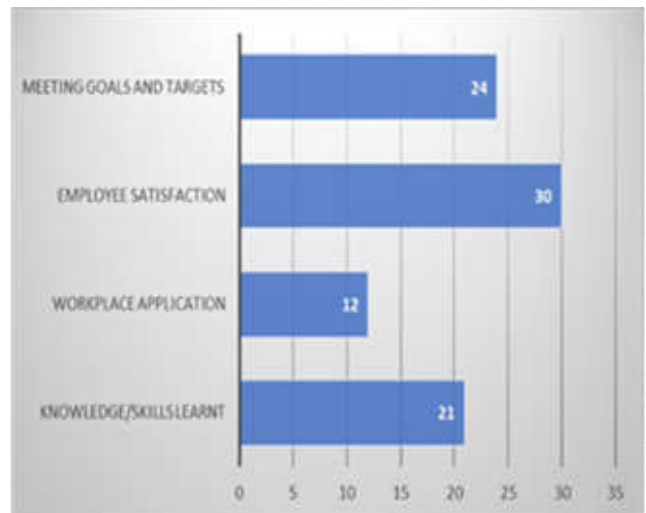
Interpretation:

- The above chart depicts that 80% of companies surveyed actually ask for training needs from their employees and also act upon it.



- 17% respondent companies said they only sometimes ask for training needs from their employees.
- 3% companies said that they don't ask for training needs from employees at all.

Parameters for Training Effectiveness given importance to



Interpretation

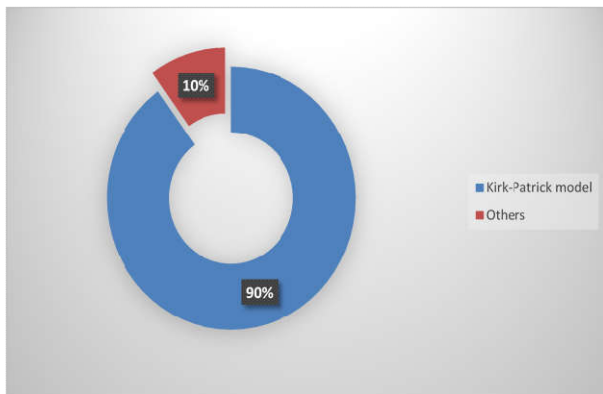
- Out of 30 companies, 24 focuses on difference in employee's capability of meeting goals and targets as a parameter to measure training effectiveness.
- All the 30 respondents said they pay most attention to employee's satisfaction level with the training provided to them.
- The least count of companies i.e only 12 provides attention to measure workplace application of training insights for an employee.

And 21 respondent companies focus on measuring knowledge/skills learnt by an employee post training.

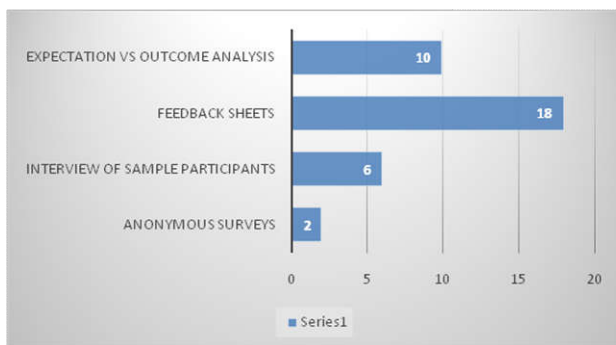
Overall model/approach to measure training effectiveness (open ended)

Interpretation

90% of respondents approaches or applies Kirk-Patrick Model to measure training effectiveness. Only 10% of the respondent companies use any other type of model or approach to measure their results for the training provided



Preferred tools to evaluate employee satisfaction

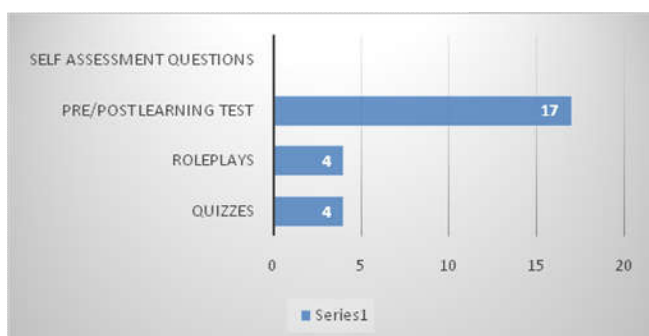


Interpretation

- The above data suggests that 18 out of 30 respondent companies make use of feedback sheets as a tool to measure training effectiveness.
- Expectation vs outcome analysis is also quite in use with 10 respondent companies in support of it.
- Only companies responded that they adopt anonymous surveys as the best tool to measure employee satisfaction post training.

The count for interview of sample participants to be used as a tool for the purpose is 6 companies.

Preferred tools to evaluate knowledge/skills learnt



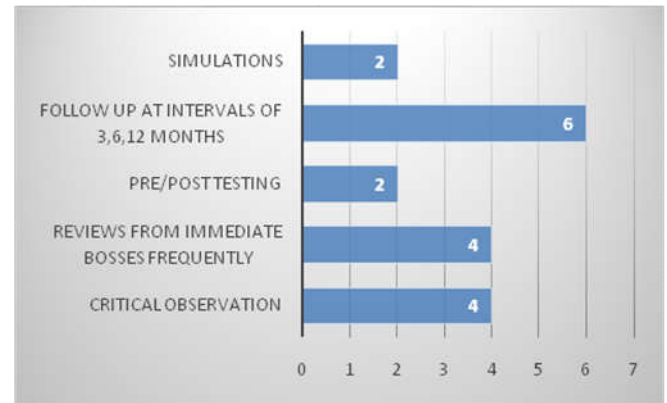
Interpretation

- Out of 21 companies that focuses on this parameter, none of them said that they make use of self-assessment questions as a tool for measurement.
- 4 of them indulge in role-plays to evaluate the knowledge/skills learnt by the employees through the training provided.
- 4 respondent companies firmly believed that quizzes

can be the best practice to measure the knowledge learnt by an employee post training.

- Maximum companies out of 21 i.e 11 companies said that they make use of Pre/Post Learning tests and regard it as a best practice.

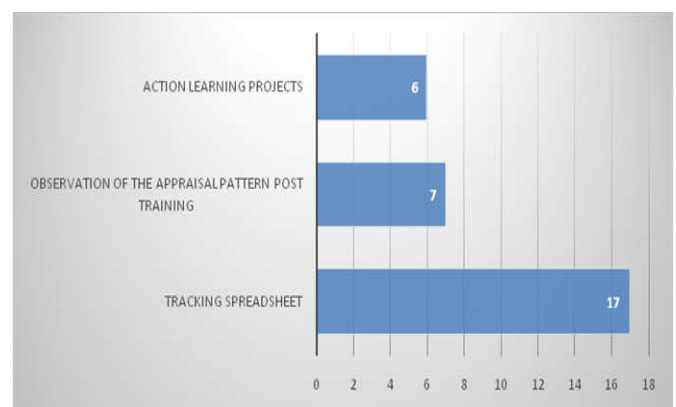
Preferred tools to evaluate Workplace Application



Interpretation

- 2 company respondents have said that they use simulations as a tool for the purpose.
- 2 companies again make use of Pre/Post Testing for measurement.
- 4 respondents believed that reviews from immediate bosses could be the best tool for evaluating the workplace application of knowledge and skills.
- There are overall 4 companies that responded with critical observation as the applied tool.
- Maximum count of companies i.e 6 responded with following up at intervals of 3,6,12 months

Preferred tools to measure change in meeting goals and targets

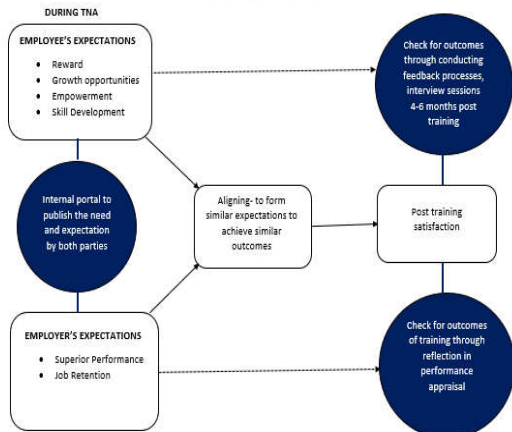


Interpretation:

- There are 17 respondent companies that make use of Tracking Spreadsheet as the best practice to check for change in meeting objectives and targets post training.
- 7 companies in total are in favor of observation of appraisal pattern post training to evaluate the effectiveness.
- 6 respondents focus on Action Learning Projects to measure whether the employees are able to meet targets and have significance difference in performance.

EXPECTATION VS OUTCOME

ANALYSIS



There is noticeable gap between the processes internally and externally, several other new found tools are available.

The internal conditions are on the lower side. There is a need for introduction and application of new tools in the company. There are several other successful tools available in the market that all the best in class companies have adopted.

Recommendations and Suggestions

- The Kirk-Patrick Model should continue to be in use, but the relevant tools to be added underit, to enhance the complete process and to fill the gap
- All the 4 parameters should be given equal attention and importance

Recommended Pre/Post learning tests

Some examples are:

True/false questions, Multiple-choice questions, Matching questions, Drag and drop questions. Fill-in-the-blank questions, Short answer questions, Essay questions

Proposed framework recommended

1. Expectation VS Outcome Analysis
2. Tracking Spreadsheet

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| Performance Item | Success Metric & Instructions | Weight/Accomplishment | Areas for Assessment | Other Areas of Assessment |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Vani Sharma | Review date: June 30 | | | List desired career development for the short term (6-12 months) and long term. Goal is to establish a learning path and associated action plans for taking on increased responsibilities and |
| OVERALL PERFORMANCE GRADE | Excellent, Very Good, Average, Needs Improvement | Needs Improvement | | |
| Objectives | Objectives should be measurable: | | | |
| PRE-TRAINING | through June 30 | 100% | | |
| Generates Leads | 3,000 qualified leads | 25% | | Email Marketing |
| Customer Retention | Improve customer retention 2% from current level | 25% | | Negotiation Techniques Customer Service Communication skills |
| Branding | Update Website and Brand | 25% | | Social Media Handling, Copywriting |
| SEO Traffic | Improve SEO traffic by 15% from current level | 25% | | Digital Marketing Techniques |
| Vani Sharma | Review date: June 30 | | | |
| OVERALL PERFORMANCE GRADE | Excellent, Very Good, Average, Needs Improvement | | | |
| POST-TRAINING | through EOY | | | |
| Insert objective | | 25% | | |
| Insert objective | | 25% | | |
| Insert objective | | 25% | | |
| Insert objective | | 25% | | |

FINDINGS

The most popularly applied model for measuring training effectiveness is

The Kirk-Patrick Model: The External analysis suggests that it is the most accepted training evaluation model and even it produces best results for the company.

| Employee Satisfaction | Knowledge/Skills learnt |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1.Expectation vs Outcome Analysis | 2. Quizzes |
| | 3. Pre/Post Learning Tests |
| | 4. Quizzes |
| Workplace Application | Meeting goals and Objectives |
| 5. Reviews from immediate superior | 8. Action Learning Projects |
| 6. Simulations | 9. Tracking Spreadsheet |
| 7. Follow up at intervals of 3,6,12 months | |

Employee Satisfaction as a parameter is given most importance to

Maximum companies showed keen focus on measurement of Employee Satisfaction to evaluate Training Effectiveness.

15 out of 30 aspirational companies actually give required attention to all 4 parameters.

Ideally, all the 4 parameters are equally important. So, it is important to focus on all 4.