Maximize The Impact of Your Training Programs
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Training, like any other activity, is competing for funds with other initiatives within the organization - including marketing, IT, etc. As a result justification is needed to reassure executives that investment in training programs will not only yield positive results, but will also outperform other initiatives. When dictated by law (such as OSHA related training), justification is easy. However, in the many cases such as leadership, supervisory as well as IT skills development, demonstrating the value and in-turn the return on investment (ROI) of a training program can be challenging, because the direct outcome - i.e., skills/competencies acquired by trainees - does not have measurable benefits. The value of the training program is derived from the application of the newly acquired skills and competencies - i.e., how individuals use the newly acquired skills/competencies to minimize errors, reduce costs, or increase revenue, for example.

In simple terms, ROI is the benefits of a training program divided by its costs. The higher the ROI, the more attractive the training investment. Although at first glance, ROI may appear to be a purely financial measure to be handled by accountants and training executives, in reality all members of the training team including instructional designers and instructors can greatly impact the value of training programs. To find out how, let us examine the elements that make up ROI.

We can increase ROI by either increasing the benefits of the training program or reducing its costs.

Benefits of training programs can be increased in the following ways:

- Increase the effectiveness of the training program. If a training program is more effective, trainees will be more confident in applying the newly acquired skills/competencies and in turn increase the benefits and ROI of the training program.
- Align training with organizational goals. Understanding why individuals require training - i.e., how the newly acquired skills/competencies will impact organizational goals as well as the importance of these goals - will help you focus on high priority areas and in turn increase the overall benefits and ROI of your training programs.
- Reduce time to competency. Understanding the benefits of the training program - i.e., how the newly acquired skills/competencies can minimize errors, reduce costs or increase revenue, for example - will help you explore options that minimize time to competency and in turn increase the benefits and ROI of your training programs.

Costs of training programs can be decreased in the following ways:

- Select the right blend of delivery options. Alternate delivery options may reduce out of pocket expenses as well as resources needed to develop, manage, administer, deliver, maintain and support a training program and in turn increase its ROI.
- Evaluate the use of internal versus external resources. External resources can provide specialized services to reduce the time and risk of implementing a training program and in turn increase its ROI.
- Evaluate build versus buy decisions. Off-the-shelf training programs on generic topics should also be considered, whenever possible, to reduce the time and costs of implementing training programs and in turn increase their ROI.

Over the next few issues, we will examine each of these strategies in greater details and how you can contribute the success of your training programs.

Contributions

Contributions, on what worked and didn't - including practical tips, advice, white papers, case studies, articles, reviews, online seminars, software tools and research reports - are welcomed. Please send to bahlis@bnhexpertsoft.com. Full credit will be given to author.

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