



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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How to Show the Value of Project Management Training

Many businesses struggle with the question of whether they are getting their money's worth in sending employees to training seminars. This question can be applied to project management training as well as any other type of business training. You know the cost side of training too well. But how do you tell what the business value is?

What We Ask Today

The most common way to determine business value today is to ask the trainee whether he or she thinks the class was valuable. This is very touchy-feely and doesn't give you much information to go on, but it is probably the most that most companies ask in terms of follow-up. Another method is to see how much of the class content that can be applied on the job. But again, this is usually done informally, without an attempt to actually see how the performance of the trainee improves.

A Rigorous Approach

There is a process for more rigorously determining the value received for your training dollars. These ideas are not for the faint of heart. They take more preparation and they take more of that most precious commodity – time. But see if it makes sense, and whether the results of this process will give you a much better feel for the value that you are receiving from training. You can also start with some of these steps, and try for the rest later.

1. First, the trainee and their manager meet a few weeks before the training is scheduled to make sure the trainee is ready for the class. The manager and trainee discuss how the training can help the trainee on their job. One of the important parts of the discussion is to identify opportunities where the trainee can apply the new skills on their job. (This information should be documented so that it can be compared with a post-class assessment done later.)
2. When the actual class begins each of the trainees should complete an initial survey showing their specific knowledge level of the class material.
3. Immediately after the class, each trainee completes a survey showing how they liked the class, instructor skill level, how the logistics were, etc. These surveys are designed for the benefit of the training company and the instructor. The survey provides a sense for how the class went and how the instructor performed. This survey is not designed to show how much you learned at the class.
4. A week or two after the class, the trainee completes a post-class survey showing their current knowledge level in the subject. For the most part, it is exactly the same as the initial survey from activity #2 above. This is compared to the initial survey to provide some sense as to how much the trainee learned and retained. If this survey comes out close to the original version, it may show that the training may not have been very effective. You would expect that the post-class survey would show improvement.



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5. Here is the key step. A few months after the class, the trainee and their manager meet again for a post-class assessment, which is a follow-up to activity number one. In this discussion, the trainee and manager discuss the value of the class, and whether the class resulted in increased productivity and increased business value. Part of this discussion focuses on the opportunities that the trainee has had to apply the new skills. In fact, the training may have been superb, but if there have been no opportunities to apply the new skills, then the business value will be marginal.

Summary

In most training classes today, the trainee completes the class feedback for the benefit of the training company, and then tells his or her manager how good the class was. This superficial feedback is all that is available to gauge business value. However, the real test of business value is whether the class resulted in an increased skill level that can be applied to your job to make you more productive. This cannot be determined immediately after a class. However, you can get a sense for the business value in two steps. First is a knowledge survey completed a few weeks after the class, and compared with an initial baseline. (This can be repeated a month or two later as well.) However, the only way to determine business value is to determine in the months after the class whether or not the training has actually been applied to your job. If you capture this information on all your classes, you will get a much better and more fact-based view of whether the classes you attend are providing business value to your company.