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Grand Transfer Ideas

Training transfer is considered successful and complete only when a participant understands and assimilates all that is being taught and can apply it at his work place. However, even as organizations spend huge sums on training, the rate of training transfer remains dismal.

Consequently, the business payoff of training, especially in terms of improved performance and work-related behaviors continues to remain low.

How does an organization improve training transfer? In an attempt to answer this question we shall consider the different dimensions of training transfer.

While paying attention to who conducts the training and how training is presented is important, an equally critical aspect of training transfer is what a learner does during the training session. Surveys reveal that almost all participants lose interest sometime during a training session.

While the following ideas help maintain interest levels, they also fend off common complaints about training such as, "I do not have enough time," "My boss will not let me do anything I learn anyway" or "It is a waste of time".

Good ideas

Get a great trainer

Not all managers and sadly, not all trainers have the ability to train. However, most organizations do not carry out caliber checks before asking their managers or trainers to conduct learning sessions. The ability to train others is an important indicator of training comprehension and retention levels.

Therefore, it would be prudent to get good trainers. Moreover, since learners respond more favorably to people experienced in their field, asking C-level and top executives to double up as trainers could help.

Participants also respond positively to instructors who have addressed or experienced the situations illustrated in the training. By virtue of their experiences such instructors can better connect training to real-life situations.

Encourage top-down participation

Participants are more willing to experiment what they learn when all three levels of an organization jointly endorse the importance of training. This calls for active participation from all of them.

An employee who attends training with his colleagues, supervisors and manager is more open to training transfer. Transfer levels are further improved when participants see their managers and executives try out new skills.

Present training as a whole

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One training session must build on another by reinforcing content already learnt and introducing content in store. For instance, a trainer, during a supervisory development program, introduces a feedback process in the communications session. This feedback model should then be reinforced in the performance management session.

Later it can be emphasized in the conflict resolution session as well. One of these sessions can even be used to introduce the topic of motivation.

Training transfer remains poor unless it has reference to earlier sessions and the content is reinforced every once in a while. However, the common approach is to present training as a menu of available sessions and classes.

This absence of any interconnection between the classes and information provided is a major reason for participants failing to retain and rehearse skills and knowledge. The organization too loses an opportunity to reinforce learning.

Keep training relevant

It is important to train employees in only those skills and information that are directly applicable to their jobs. When an employee cannot put to use what he has learnt, the chances of his forgetting it sooner or later is high.

For strategic skills such as team building, listening and providing feedback, training transfer can be improved by setting up situations where employees can practice these skills immediately and regularly.

In application-oriented training such as software training, organizations should avoid training unless participants have ready and free access to the software. In fact, in such training, experts guarantee better retention if participants are first allowed to experiment with the application or product before training on it.

Divide training into 'digestible' chunks

Employees learn better when

- Training is divided into small sessions, each with a set of well-defined objectives
- The sessions are flexible so employees can attend them at their convenience, for a couple of hours a week, until the topic is covered
- Employees are given ample opportunities to practice between the sessions. This allows employees to discuss their difficulties and successes while applying what they have learnt at work
- Skills and knowledge learned is reinforced in subsequent sessions

Begin well

A good beginning sets the pace for good training transfer. Instructors should open training sessions by emphasizing on the "what is in it for the participant" factor. Additionally, the opening session should inform participants on what to expect from



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training in terms of improvement in skills and knowledge or a change in behavior. These expectations should be realistic and over-promise participants.

Address different learning styles

An ideal way to appeal to a variety of learning styles is to use a range of information applications and activities. For participants who learn visually, films and transparencies improve content retention.

'Vocal' participants learn better in group discussions, presentations and experiential exercises. Participants who prefer hands-on learning gain from real-life examples, case studies and analogies.

Overall participation improves when training appeals to different learning styles. Also, participants retain better when training is varied and stimulating. Additionally, the use of real-world examples and application exercises allows participants to relate their learning to their actual jobs. This facilitates and ensures better training transfer.

Improve learner engagement

Simple ways to improve engagement levels include:

- Asking participants to highlight the most important idea or concept on a page
- Providing time for note taking or suggesting application ideas during sessions
- Encouraging participants to ask questions and clarify doubts