

# Management's Commitment to Training

By Paula Ketter

WORKPLACE LEARNING and performance professionals have spent decades trying to prove training's value to company management.

In the September 1997 article, "10 Ways to Get Management Buy-In," author Scott B. Parry outlined some typical complaints from training professionals:

- The people who need the training the most aren't sent.
- Management often asks us to shorten a course to less time than is needed to meet course objectives.
- Some managers undermine our efforts by telling trainees, "I don't know what they taught you in class, but here's

how I want things done."

## January 1978

The *Training and Development Journal* highlighted the issue in January 1978. In the article, "How to Get Management's

Commitment for

Training," author W.T. Scherer wrote that the first thing a trainer must consider is why his organization has a training function.

All of us who have been in the training profession for any length of time realize that there are a number of reasons companies go into training that are not all positive. Sometimes the interest is strictly to impress the client.

If the motives of an organization for starting a training function are solely to fool clients or employees, and if organizations are not seriously intent on improving individual and organizational performance, I doubt that there is much a trainer can do to get the kind of management commitment needed for real success.

Scherer also suggested that trainers assess the nature of their organization.

*When there is real demand for people with increased abilities and talents—when the future of the organization depends on having such people available—then getting the support you require from management is a simple process provided you deliver positive results.*

*The fact is that the training staff is not responsible for developing people. It is the management of the organization who are responsible for promoting better performance and for stimulating career growth in individuals. The function of the trainer is not to relieve management of that responsibility but to assist them in accomplishing it.*

## August 1992

In a *Training and Development* article about how to demonstrate training's return-on-investment, authors Eric A. Davidove and Peggy A. Schroeder admit

that tracking ROI can be time consuming, but it is vital.

Too many training professionals have no idea how training investments relate to their companies business objectives. When asked, trainees usually measure the payroll and resource expenditures to produce, deliver, and maintain training.

Training departments are under pressure to demonstrate how training investments relate to business objectives, but standard approaches sometimes lack meaningful evidence for reducing investments and increasing effectiveness.

Many business leaders and C-level executives still view training as an overhead expense. With thorough ROI evaluations, training departments can convince businesses to view them instead as partners in creating the assets that are crucial to organizational success.

## September 1997

In Parry's article, he gives specific actions for how to get management support for workplace training and development programs.

1. Start at the top. Link training to your company's business plan.
2. Conduct a needs analysis. Involve participants' managers.
3. Report the results. Summarize the results of the needs analysis, and send out the proposed course objectives for managers to review.
4. Brief participants' managers. Conduct a one-hour briefing several weeks before launching a course.
5. Bring the workplace into the workshop. Encourage participants to discuss problems and situations they face on the job.
6. Have managers instruct. Invite some managers who have been actively supportive of the training to work with the instructor and provide team teaching.
7. Take the workshop back to the workplace. Provide new employees with a job description and give them time to make notes after you cover each major task or responsibility.
8. Schedule Alumni Day. Bring participants together three to six weeks after they complete a course to report on the cost and benefits of implementing their action plans.
9. Write your success story. Collect data on participants' success using interviews, post-training questionnaires, and the Alumni Day reports.
10. Conduct a cost-benefit analysis. Tally all of the expenses and benefits of a course, projected over the full payback period to prove that effective training doesn't cost; it pays.

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