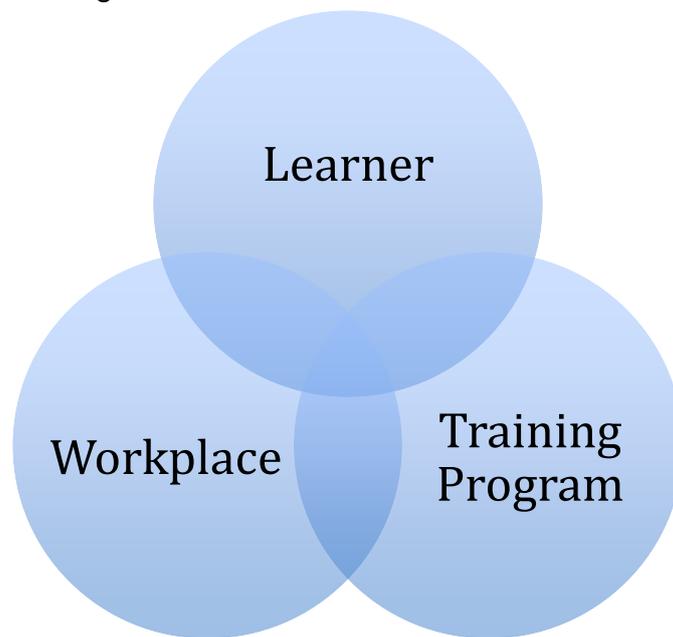


Maximizing the Scholarship Experience through Workplace Connection

Investment in new learning provides opportunity for growth for the learner and the organisation. There are key factors that increase the likelihood of a successful outcome.

Appropriate choice of study for the learner requires mindful, methodical selection. However that is not everything. The work environment that a course participant returns to has a very significant impact on learning. If the workplace provides opportunities to use the new skills straightaway the learning is significantly increased. Likewise, with no chance or support to apply the new learning the return on investment is much lower.



Leading research into return on investment of the training dollar has been done by Donald Kirkpatrick. The critical factors involved in assessing training programs, involves not just the program and the participant but the workplace response to new learning.

To ensure that the scholarship experience is a positive one preparation back at the workplace is an important factor.

In his book *Evaluating Training Programs – The Four Levels* (Berrett-Koehler 1994) Kirkpatrick provides a sequence of ways to evaluate training programs.

Level 1	Reaction – does it satisfy the need?
Level 2	Learning – produce measurable change in attitudes/knowledge and or skill?
Level 3	Behaviour – is there change in behaviour relating to the application of attitude/knowledge/skill?
Level 4	Results – increased production, improved quality, decreased costs, reduced frequency of accidents, increased sales, reduced turnover, higher profits?

A good needs analysis of the individual and the program should deliver the right reaction to the program and learning. Level 3 - Behaviour, refers to the changes back in the workplace. The onus is not just on the learner or the training course. This level refers specifically to behavioural changes at work and how the workplace encourages that change.

Kirkpatrick points out that in order for change to occur there must be four conditions:

1. The person must have a desire to change.
2. The person must know what to do and how to do it.
3. The person must work in the right climate
4. The person must be rewarded for changing.

Scholarship winners are people who possess a clear desire to excel. The programs invested in are of the highest quality and we expect they provide the right environment to learn just how to bring the desired change about.

However point three regarding the 'climate for change' refers, not only to the workplace but specifically to the participant's immediate supervisor.

Do they: prevent, discourage, are neutral, encourage or require the participant to use the new skills. Is the boss aware of what the new skills are and ensuring that they are transferred to the job through a learning contract or specific opportunities? If the bosses know what the new material is before the course and that it is a requirement that they are involved in its implementation in the workplace, success is tangibly greater.

This is a simple step in the process to initiate and contribute significantly to the final outcome. Involving the workplace in the learning process and reducing the unknowns about the program outcomes is an important way of reducing risk and increasing engagement.

It does not need to be difficult? Simply making a time to discuss the participant's goals prior to the program and then ensuring that positive expectations are set and supported back in the workplace after the training can make a significant positive impact.

The following is a template for manager support prior to the training program.

Email Subject: Manager Support for Scholarship Training Opportunity

Getting a better result from training

You have a team member who is attending the xxx training program. The xxxx program is designed to make participants more conscious of xxx and show them how to improve. The workshop covers:

- Specific knowledge, skills

Research into return on investment in workplace training, shows that the highest return occurs where an expectation is set for participants to use the new learning as soon as they return to work. In cases where the manager asks the participant to implement the learnings as soon as they return to work the best results are achieved. It will also give you a reference point and common language to make these discussions more focused and easier.

Action

Before the Training Program

Have a meeting to discuss the participant's hopes for the training program. Ask the participant:

- how they chose the program?
- What criteria did they use for their needs analysis?
- What are their learning goals?
- Establish what activities would need to be engaged in when they return to work in order to specifically utilise the new skills. Ensure that workloads are taken into account and commit to making the new learning a significant priority.

After the Workshop

Please ask your team member:

- 1. What do you see as your strengths in the area you have been training in?**
- 2. What specifically are you going to work on to change/improve?**
- 3. How can I help?**

If you tell them that you are going to ask them for a meeting to discuss this as soon as possible after the course, you will set up the expectation and help them be prepared for the follow up.

Please ask these questions as soon as possible when they return to work and follow up in a week and again at regular intervals.