

# Results from Leadership and Management Development

## Level 2 – Learning

### What Result will Providers Operating at this Level Provide?

A needs assessment is carried out, where delegates are tested to find out what they already know and don't know. Training is delivered, and delegates are retested on what they now know. The result is shown in the difference between what they know now compared to what they knew before.

A certificate is often awarded to show that delegates now know more than they knew before. Where the certificate is deemed to be a useful addition to the delegate's CV (eg an MBA), it is often the securing of this certificate that is held to be the most important result of the training programme.

Training that is focused predominantly on learning varies widely, from an MBA at a prominent business school to a one day team role or personality profiling session run in a kitchen. *What* is learned can range from the latest, most complex process improvement models to the fact that one member of the department is prone to being less detail-oriented than another.

### Why Look for Anything More than Learning?

Why would a learning and development manager look for a programme that delivers anything more than *learning*? Because, strangely enough, leadership and management training which focuses primarily on learning often does not deliver *development*.

### Increased Knowledge ≠ Change in Behaviour

Kirkpatrick puts forward the idea that we can only ascertain if learning has taken place through testing before and after a training event – did the people score better on the test after the training than they did before?

The test questions he puts forward provide clues as to why training that stops at the level of learning is not helpful when developing leadership or management capabilities, particularly in senior people.

1. *If a change is going to be unpopular with your subordinates, you should proceed slowly to gain acceptance. Agree / Disagree*
2. *If you are promoted to a management job, you should make it different than it was under your predecessor. Agree / Disagree*

What is the "right" answer here?



Clues:

*Testimonials focus on how much the trainer knows, on all the useful tips and tricks the delegate picked up, or on what the delegates now know*

*Promotion focuses on participants' intentions to put what they learned into practice, rather than what they did*

*Business promotion focuses on the heritage / prestige of the institution – this is often a useful ally for a junior L&D officer attempting to persuade a senior manager to attend a program*

*There will often be little detail about how courses changed delegates' behaviour; instead promotion will focus on how programs kick-started careers – often through contacts made on the course, or once delegates were able to put the qualification on their CV*

## Management – You Either Get It Right or Wrong

Kirkpatrick points out that the “correct” answer to both of these is *agree*.

This prompts two further questions. First, under what circumstances is the “correct” answer to these questions *agree*? In question 1, how quickly is “quickly”? Exactly how slowly should the manager proceed? What if the change has to be implemented quickly? What if proceeding slowly will not erode subordinates’ resistance? What if we are skilful enough as managers to proceed quickly *and* create the necessary level of commitment?

*Knowing the “right” attitude and behaving differently as a result are two separate things*

When we turn to question 2 – how different should we make a management job to what it was under our predecessor? How much should be retained? To what extent is it useful to abandon everything our predecessor was doing for the sake of it, simply to create change?

The second, and deeper area of concern is this: when managers know the “right” answers, how likely are they to behave differently? As some of the questions above imply, knowing the “right” attitude, and behaving differently as a result, are two separate things – first because to know is not to do (“*I know I should do some succession planning, but there just isn’t time... and I know I should drink less, take more exercise and eat more vegetables, but honestly...*”), and second because if we do decide to change our behaviour we need to know not only *what* we should be doing but also *how* to do it.

In fact, the idea that leadership and management are things you can get “right” is as useful as the idea that life is something you can get “right”: “*I got my life right – they gave me a certificate.*” They are both ongoing, complex activities which resist classification of the “agree / disagree” variety.

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## The Real Link Between Learning and Behaviour

*“If little or no learning has taken place, little or no change in behaviour can be expected.”* Kirkpatrick

This is only part of the relationship between learning and behaviour. Managers have developed their style based on their experiences throughout their career. These hard-won experiences will only be unseated by other hard-won experiences, not by clever theories or arguments. Learning how to lead and manage others only comes from doing it, just as learning how to swim only happens in the pool.

So the function of training in the first instance is to prompt managers to try new things, and learn from their own experiences. If this does not happen, and models, theories or arguments are shown without direct experience on the part of the delegate, then real, useful learning will not take place. Most learning-focused courses are not geared to create change in behaviour, therefore it is left to chance what of the learning is brought to bear to create real behavioural change and results for your company. What has been newly learned has to compete with hard-won experience – and usually loses.

The only way to test whether managers have learned to manage better is to see what they do differently in the workplace. Training at this level does not explore what happens in the workplace, so you will never really know if they have learned or not.

*If you feel you have learned something from this article and would like a certificate to prove it, please contact Mitchell Phoenix at the email address below. Or you could use this knowledge to inform your decisions about development, and get something more useful than a piece of paper to put on your wall...*