



MITCHELL PHOENIX

## Mitchell Phoenix and the Kirkpatrick Model of Training Evaluation

Donald L Kirkpatrick first published his ideas on training evaluation in 1959, in a series of articles in the US Training and Development Journal. The articles were subsequently included in Kirkpatrick's book *Evaluating Training Programs* (1975), published by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), with whom Kirkpatrick still maintains (as at 2005) close connections, having previously served as president. Donald Kirkpatrick has written several books about corporate change, training and evaluation, and has consulted with some of the world's largest corporations.

The Kirkpatrick model of training evaluation proposed evaluating training on four levels:

|                    |                                |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Level 1 Evaluation | 1st Reaction                   |
| Level 2 Evaluation | Learning transfer              |
| Level 3 Evaluation | Behavioral change              |
| Level 4 Evaluation | Positive, attributable results |

### **1st Reaction**

*Delegates evaluate Mitchell Phoenix Programmes each day using questionnaires that provide feedback, check understanding and the assimilation of ideas.*

*The feedback sheet acts to help the participant recall the key points from the day.*

### **Connected to Learning Transfer**

*Level one evaluation precedes a commitment to act on transferring learning into the workplace. Mitchell Phoenix participants are asked to state explicitly how they will act on what they have learnt.*

### Level 1— 1st Reaction

The first and most immediate level aims to measure participants' initial reactions to the training program. There is debate about the usefulness of this measure especially regarding the superficial nature of simple evaluation documents. It is important for a number of reasons:

1. It provides the seminar leader with early feedback on the relevance of content and is the measurement of initial delegate satisfaction with the training experience. This satisfaction is important in motivating delegates to transfer learning into the workplace. Levels two and three depend upon this.
2. The practice of evaluating daily content reminds delegates of the flow and structure as well as the actual content received. This revision acts as 'aides memoir' and helps to embed important messages and re-organise thinking in readiness for the next event.
3. The evaluations can be 'read' by experienced trainers skilled in interpreting the comments and trends that emerge from the documents. This intelligence can be used to further enhance the next event by directing the seminar leader towards subjects not fully understood and away from those seen as covered. In addition, attitudes and personal development issues for individual participants can be



## MITCHELL PHOENIX

### Mitchell Phoenix and the Kirkpatrick Model of Training Evaluation

identified and woven into the structure and content of subsequent meetings.

*Level one evaluation is useful for immediate reaction to the events but does not signal improvement.*

*Results occur as soon as training is transferred into real life. This happens in Mitchell Phoenix programmes on the day after a training day.*

A common issue associated with level one evaluation is the superficial nature of the information gathered. This does not have to be the case. The quality of the questions determines the usefulness of the information that can be gathered. This early evaluation represents an opportunity to gauge the commitment to application.

Learning (Level two outcomes) and transfer of learning (Level three outcomes) is more likely to occur when participants have positive attitudes toward the training program. Those measuring training effectiveness need to establish performance criteria against results in the workplace, so that common evaluative judgments can be made on all four levels of Kirkpatrick's outcome evaluation.

#### Level 2—Learning Transfer

Level two evaluation is done soon after the training event to determine if participants gained the knowledge, skills, or attitudes. A couple of issues present themselves in leadership development:

1. How does a business measure knowledge, skills, and attitudes?
2. What instrument(s) can be used to determine improvement in level two outcomes?

It is here in the area of leadership development that the Kirkpatrick model potentially has less relevance. How do we measure things that are almost entirely subjective improvements in attitude from one week to the next? What is the virtue of creating tenuous measurements and connections when the process of measurement takes more energy than the improvements themselves?

Ready & Conger (2003) call these "make-believe metrics" and suggest that trying to measure them is less cost effective than at later stages. This is true in cases where training fails to introduce useful ideas, tools and tactics. Under these circumstances it is tempting to try to measure intangibles like attitude, culture and changes in thinking.

Where training is effective and provides delegates with useful guidance they will almost certainly make use of such tools, notice their own progress and be able to recall specific instances of improvement. They can and should record this progress and use it to prove return on investment and signal emerging and permanent change.

#### **Learning Transfer**

*Mitchell Phoenix programmes run on the basis of 'one day each month'.*

*Delegates decide on workplace projects to apply learning, work on the transfer of behaviours immediately on the day following each seminar.*

*Senior line managers participate in the reporting of results and performance evaluation.*



## MITCHELL PHOENIX

### Mitchell Phoenix and the Kirkpatrick Model of Training Evaluation

#### **Behavioural Change**

*Mitchell Phoenix work 'Top Down' with the business to create joint ownership of development at all levels.*

*This work includes establishing principles of operation to ensure the culture is prepared for those who follow.*

*Communicating strategic drivers and expectations are part of the development plan.*

*Directly attributable results are clocked up by delegates from the next day.*

#### Level 3—Behavioral Changes

At Level 3, the Kirkpatrick goal is to find out if training program participants change their on-the-job-behavior as a result of their attendance and participation in the training program. Level three evaluation involves measuring the transfer of knowledge, skills, and attitudes from the training context to the workplace. This is a crucial area where passivity allows the 'pathologies' identified by Ready and Conger to actively prevent the benefits of training being introduced into the workplace.

Ready & Conger identified three 'pathologies' or illnesses that prevent the transfer of learning. We present them for the professional leader in the positive context as key success factors.

1. Managers at all levels accept joint responsibility for leadership and management development - ownership is distributed, demand for change is established as a cultural and business requirement. The organizational culture and climate must change in order to support individual change.
2. No quick-fix, 'flavour-of-the-month', productised leadership initiatives. Ready and Conger eschew short-term leadership development based on the latest book or idea to emerge from the training gene pool. They argue that all leadership should be built around the company's own strategic drivers and requirements. These must be understood at the levels involved and reinforced at the start of training.
3. Make believe metrics as already mentioned. Ready and Conger advise not to expend energy and resource measuring what continues to elude measurement. Attend to business outcomes and the development of common culture and practice. The training or learning can be directly linked to workplace activity and outcomes. Project themes can be set and live business issues addressed using learning from the training. This activity provides a business focus on results created by performing and practicing the behaviors introduced in the training.

Placing the burden of transfer on the shoulders of one individual or function (CEO, HR or Delegate) is unlikely to allow benefits to be gained. By working as a group and accepting widespread responsibility for training gains, the organization can act in ways that welcome and support the learning process. Learning is likely to transfer more effectively if the conditions in the work setting are favorable and there is a widespread demand for such transfer. The CEO can champion this thinking, HR can manage the environment and individuals can bring training benefits direct to the workplace without inhibition and with clear goals.



## MITCHELL PHOENIX

### Mitchell Phoenix and the Kirkpatrick Model of Training Evaluation

#### Level 4 – Positive and Attributable Results

##### **Positive and Attributable Results**

*In Mitchell Phoenix programmes, delegates and line managers work together to chart progress on a regular basis.*

*The results are recorded in presentations to senior managers and to their colleagues on the programme.*

*Participants in the programme work on collaborative projects building mutual understanding and a common management language.*

The final level aims to find out if the training program led to final business results that contribute to the “bottom line” (i.e., business profits). Level four outcomes are not limited to return on training investment; they can include other major results that contribute to the effective functioning of an organization. These include outcomes that most people would agree is “good for the business.” and can be changes in financial outcomes (such as positive ROI or increased profits) or changes in variables that should have a relatively direct effect on financial outcomes at some point in the future, for example:

- ✓ Improved quality of work and higher productivity
- ✓ Greater contributions from all levels - ideas, efficiencies
- ✓ Increased sales
- ✓ More secure relationships with customers
- ✓ Reduction in staff turnover, improved quality of work life
- ✓ Improving human relationships
- ✓ Improved vertical and horizontal communication
- ✓ Fewer grievances, lower absenteeism, higher morale
- ✓ Fewer accidents, greater job satisfaction

And, as a result, increased profits.

#### About Mitchell Phoenix

Mitchell Phoenix Limited was established in 1988 as a provider of Leadership and Management development. Since then more than 4,000 managers worldwide have benefited from the unique blend of training, coaching and consultancy. Mitchell Phoenix programmes succeed, worldwide, as a result of a unique structure that allows the effective transfer of benefit from the training seminar to the business.

#### References

Douglas A. Ready and Jay A. Conger (2003), *Why Leadership-Development Efforts Fail*, MIT Sloan Management Review, Spring 2003, <http://sloanreview.mit.edu/smr/issue/2003/spring/11/>

Donald L. Kirkpatrick (1996), *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels*, Berrett-Koehler (Short Disc); Reprint edition (February 1, 1996), ISBN: 1881052850