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## Sustaining the Impact of Training

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The objective of learning is to take the individual from her current state of competencies and capabilities to a higher or more advanced state - to create a positive change and impact on the individual and in the organization.

This transition, like the type that happens when a bank implements a new software, or a company introduces a new operating model represents a change. The research done by the Prosci Institute that came up with the ADKAR Model (Hiatt, 2006) suggests that for change efforts (individual or organizational) to be managed successfully, the five pillars of ADKAR must be satisfied viz:

- The individual must be **AWARE** of the Change;
- The individual must **DESIRE** the Change to happen;
- The individual must acquire the **KNOWLEDGE** required to Change;
- The individual must have the **ABILITY** to change; and
- There must be sufficient **REINFORCEMENT** to support the Change.

It stands to reason therefore that since learning is aimed at changing individuals and organizations, then our approach to traditional training needs to be driven by a tested change management framework. It is evident that no matter the approach to training that is taken – self study, e-learning, facilitator led workshop, etc, or indeed the instructional design or media used, most of our training does not focus on activities that will ensure that change really happens and perhaps at its best, deals with only

two aspects of ADKAR's five pillars – KNOWLEDGE and ABILITY, leaving out the others that are critical in actually creating change.

## **Putting ADKAR into training**

It means therefore that beyond the design of instructional materials, the application of different learning styles, use of multifarious media and methods, or even the quality of facilitation, organizations will have to review their traditional training philosophies, and ensure that they can actually create the change required in its people and the organization as a whole. Anchoring this philosophy on ADKAR and fundamental change management principles will drive the right behaviour and indeed ensure that learning occurs.

## **Training Today**

Most organizations however operate a rather unsophisticated training model. The most primitive of these models use training as a means of rewarding their favoured employees (Maister, 2006). The obvious setback of this approach is that such favoured employees think of the interventions as just that – a perk, an entitlement, and therefore see no reason to incubate or transfer knowledge within the organization.

Secondly, such models create a huge gulf between the privileged few, and the rest of the pack. Over time, institutions then realize that their talent and leadership pipelines are non-existent, and they are continuously dependent on external mid and senior hires, which has implications for their financial resources, and worst still – organizational culture.

Some organizations create what they think are reinforcements for trainings like using attendance at a training as a pre-requisite for processing leave, or other entitlements or benefits. I have heard of organizations where your failure to attend a particular e-training, will prevent you from going on leave. There are others that set performance targets for Managers based on the number of training hours their subordinates get each year.

All of these are clearly naïve attempts at driving learning and change through training interventions. Clearly, employees will log on to the learning portal, show up in class, and ensure compliance just for compliance sake.

How does this drive the right behaviour or get the employees to even change or learn anything in the least?

Let's reflect on some of the things that typically happen when we go for training, and perhaps the inherent challenges will become more apparent. Before the training takes place, employees get an invitation, sometimes the trainings are requested directly by their supervisors, and unfortunately employees hardly ever get a pre-training discussion from their supervisors.

They show up at the training venue or log on to the learning portal (e-learning) and begin to get exposure to the new knowledge. If they think about it, they can come up with a number of possible reasons why they are on the course – for example, they need it as a pre-requisite for leave, their manager needs to balance his scorecard, or it's just a break off work and an opportunity to travel, or the company has made significant investments in new learning technology, and we all have to show our commitment to using those technologies.

Against the backdrop of the appalling state of education in many developing countries, like Nigeria, and the pervasive certificate mentality that abounds, employees just rack up a lot of training certificates and testimonials which they believe look good on their CV. In all of these scenarios how much actual learning takes place, and indeed to what extent have the employees and the organization's change readiness been increased? NONE! Exposure to new concepts or bodies of knowledge without being able to create a particular change is a complete waste of time.

Situating our training philosophy and approach within the ADKAR model will ensure that training activities create the desired outcomes for individuals and the organization. The next few paragraphs will be a modest attempt to highlight some policy recommendations for organizations that reflect ADKAR and fundamental change management principles.

### ***Creating Awareness***

Before getting into the classroom, Leaders, Managers and workplace learning professionals must create awareness about the change that is expected to happen after the training. This is beyond the training announcement and the details of the learning objectives. While these are

useful, there are a few other issues that must be addressed. Finding out the why of the training is important, and employees will like to know – why is the training necessary; why is it happening now; what is wrong with our current level of knowledge; and what will happen if I do not learn and make changes.

Individual needs in this regard need to be addressed, and I doubt if a three-page information flyer sent by electronic mail will necessarily meet these needs.

I have been on both sides before – sending the mails as a training manager, and receiving them as a trainee, and trust me, people hardly read the stuff. In fact, creating awareness is not just about communicating the responses to these needs. The individual recipient's awareness is often affected by a number of factors including:

- her view of the current state (I am a good leader, so why do I need leadership training?);
- how she perceives problems (some people are usually focused on internal problems, while others are more drawn to bigger picture issues. Training someone with a narrower focus on an issue that is not currently within his purview may be difficult to sell);
- the credibility of the person trying to create awareness – a boss or HR Manager with whom the relationship is already strained will not be very successful at creating awareness. Also, if previous trainings have been useless, employees will naturally tend to assume that this training will be similar

In trying to create awareness, Managers should focus on the actual change in behaviour or output required rather than the training alone. A lot of managers believe training is the solution to every problem. So, for example, once customer service ratings reduce, they request for customer service training, and try to build awareness around the need to attend customer service training.

This is limiting, the actual focus of the training should not be the training, it should be the improved quality of service that needs to change, which the training will help facilitate.

To create awareness:

- Organizations must develop and institutionalize leadership competencies that include coaching and mentoring and require Managers to have a formal conversation with staff before they embark on training discussing the context of the training and creating awareness for the need for the change expected from the training, and not necessarily the training itself.
- When organizing organization-wide training programs focused on specific areas (sales, new products, new staff induction, leadership, customer service etc), executive sponsorship is critical. This helps to deal with any issues regarding the credibility of the person creating awareness.

The CEO should be at the forefront of driving such training campaigns with messages to staff, and actual attendance at the programs. There are many examples of CEOs who give a pep talk at the beginning of these sessions that create the awareness of the training.

Many CEOs relegate training interventions to HR Directors or Training Managers. If indeed the critical changes an organization needs are to be driven by training, such interventions must receive executive sponsorship, similar to other major business projects (sales campaigns, etc).

- Communicate, Communicate.... And Communicate some more. Creating awareness requires a consistent repetition of the messaging, all through the period leading up to the training and after. Leaders and managers must communicate continuously to create awareness, as a build up to the trainings.

The role of executive sponsorship cannot be over-emphasized in creating awareness about learning. According to research from the Prosci Institute, visible Executive Sponsorship is the number one factor that drives successful change programs. Institutions like General Electric (GE) have embraced this (Krishnamoorthy, 2014), and successfully implemented its leadership development programs with visible executive sponsorship from its CEO and other senior leaders.

A mid-sized Nigerian Merchant Bank in the early 2000s instituted a Graduate training program that was christened after its CEO – Funke Osibodu as “Funke’s School of Banking”, and when Nigerian bankers think

of the Training School at Guaranty Trust Bank, which is a leading example of New Hire Training in Nigeria, they think of the Bank's founding CEO (Fola Adeola) as the brain behind the Program and its major sponsor.

A number of institutions and their executive leadership are yet to key into the benefits of visible executive sponsorship in learning programs, yet as soon business challenges occur – Training is often the recommended solution from those same leaders.

## **Building Desire**

Every change effort including training requires participants to support and participate actively in the change. Employees nominated to a training program need to know the What's In it for Me ("WIIFM"), and this helps to create the context for the desire to change. Desire is driven by a number of factors including the individual's present situation; the nature of the change, and how it will affect the individual; and very importantly, what intrinsically motivates the person.

Organizations in the private sector today are so driven in their performance cultures to focus on immediate financial measures and operational efficiencies, and quite often sacrifice innovation and sustainability. It is no wonder therefore that individuals tend not to be desirous of learning, supporting knowledge transfer or championing innovation, since their performance measurements do not really reflect these issues. The mercenary cultures that have evolved relegate learning activities to the background.

The desire to learn, innovate and change, can be enhanced by dealing with the intrinsic motivations that people have, and changing the hearts and minds of our people. This again is a critical role for executives and leaders to achieve. Leaders must lead by example – participate actively in training programs as trainees and as facilitators where necessary.

The role of leaders as coaches and teachers must be pervasive throughout the organization. Imagine your CEO taking a course each quarter for the top management and ensuring that this cascades downwards. Better still imagine the CEO and the executives actually facilitating at your Sales Academies, Leadership Academies, etc. Talk about driving the right behaviour and creating a desire to learn. There is a preponderance of

evidence to suggest that children whose parents spend lot of time reading, have a higher propensity to develop an interest in learning, than those whose parents are more drawn to watching movies. Leaders must lead by example and show their visible commitment to learning for individuals and the entire organization to desire learning.

## **Knowledge & Ability**

Individuals need to learn how to learn - and the organizational culture about learning and innovation is very important. The training materials and teaching methods will provide the knowledge required for learning to take place, but beyond this, individuals and organizations must learn to learn.

Organizations must develop a culture that encourages firstly the incubation and transfer of knowledge throughout the organization, through knowledge transfer interventions, communities of practice, etc, where delegates are required to share their new knowledge with colleagues in a structured manner.

Many organizations are massively dependent on external consultants, even when their own employees and managers have received significant training on the same subjects. Obviously, the trainings were either just a part of an inflexible learning road map, a pre-requisite for a promotion or a compliance requirement.

Leaders and workplace learning professionals have to drive the right behaviour about learning, and help the organization learn and innovate. I developed a simple model for learning and innovation, which I have used successfully for myself, and teams that I have managed: C-L-I-C-K, which encourages individuals to thoroughly **Clarify** their challenges, **Learn** how to deal with the challenge, create an **Innovative** way of dealing with the challenge, **Change** the way we handle the situation, and finally build **Knowledge** that can be incubated and shared throughout the organization (Barrow, 2010).

This model was specifically designed to counter psychological blocks and self-limiting beliefs that people and organizations have about their ability to learn, innovate and change from the inside.

HR Managers and Workplace Learning Professionals must bring their expertise to bear in driving the right culture for knowledge and ability to be harnessed to create learning and change within organizations.

## **Reinforcement**

Once a journey to change has begun, it must be sustained. Reinforcement ensures that learning outcomes are sustained, and create the transformation required. However, most trainings end up with a smiley-sheet, and at best a follow-up “hello” email a few weeks later. At GE, for example, training sessions were reinforced with a meeting with the CEO and the sign off of a commitment sheet which was project managed and tracked for execution.

A crack team of learning professionals mystery shopped and reported on service levels to institutionalize the service orientation that the trainings had taught. For change to occur after training, there needs to be accountability around the subject matter of the training. For example, isn't it a complete waste to for example have your managers certified in Lean Six Sigma, and still employ external consultants to handle process re-engineering?

Learning systems must be integrated and include reinforcement back at work. Many institutions today are moving towards the use of balanced score cards to manage organizational and individual performance. These scorecards include the critical component of People, Learning & Innovation, which many scorecard designers have not been able to get their heads around.

The performance management system and the balanced score cards are a great way of creating reinforcement. Learning activities and leadership involvement in driving learning must be incorporated into the score cards, to drive the right behaviour. Organizations also deploy 360-degree appraisal tools that seek to measure Managerial and leadership competencies.

These tools must also include tracking and measuring the extent to which Managers ensured that learning was translated to innovation and change, and everyone in the organization must be accountable for this.

## **ADKAR in Action**

The ADKAR model can transform a lot of our training programs into real opportunities to learn and change. Most importantly, the role of executives and leaders in visibly sponsoring training activities to create the desired learning and change is critical. Leaders play a critical role in driving successful change efforts, especially in creating awareness, desire and reinforcement.

There is an obvious need for more leadership participation in learning activities, if truly organizations agree that training is expected to result in a change and are willing to jettison some erroneous beliefs about what training is actually meant to deliver. Jeffrey Hiatt who created ADKAR mapped the major players in a any successful change effort based on the ADKAR model, and clearly showed the importance of executive and leadership in this process (see below, as adapted), and the sidebar on ADKAR.

If there is any message I must reinforce it is that leaders must provide the context to create awareness, desire and reinforcement to transform mere training programs into learning opportunities and create real change in their organizations.

**Figure: Mapping of Key Change Management Players in Training**

<b>Training Players</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>K</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>R</b>
Executive Leadership	●	●			●
Managers & Supervisors	●	●	●	●	●
HR & Training			●	●	

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