# THE LEARNING GAUGE

A GUIDE TO MEASURING
THE BUSINESS OUTCOME OF
LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Great Training Robbery

" Overwhelming evidence and experience show that most companies are unable to transfer employee learning into changes in individual and organization behavior or improved financial performance. Put simply, companies are not getting the return they expect on their investment in training and education. By investing in training that is not likely to yield a good return, senior executives and their HR professionals are complicit in what we have come to call the great training robbery. "
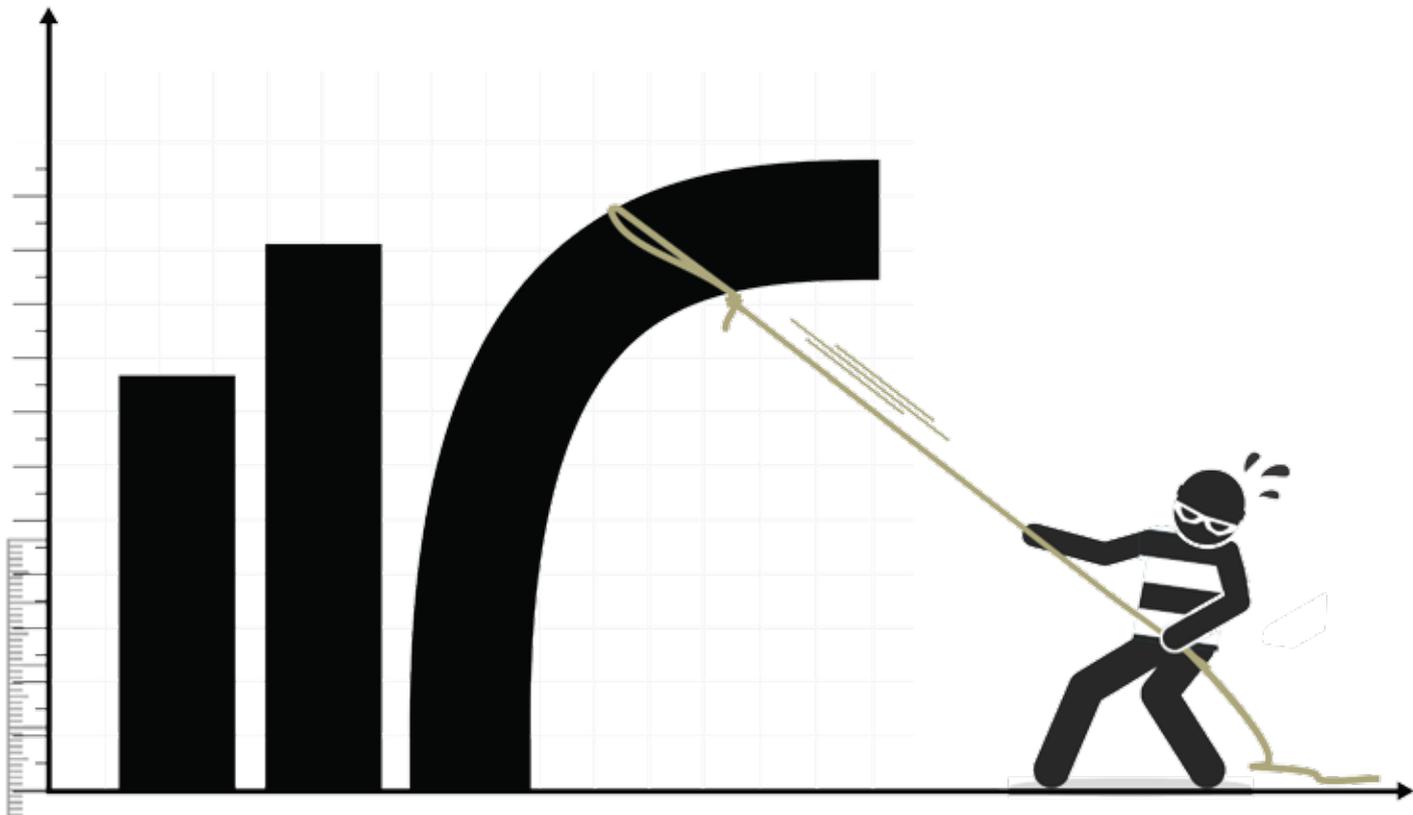
REF :Harvard Business School. The Great Training Robbery. Working Paper 16-121
https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Publication%20Files/16-121_bc0f03ce-27de-4479-a90e-9d78b8da7b67.pdf

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Section 01

Your Learning Journey Guide

You have managed to convince the leadership that effective learning is a prerequisite for development. However, the resources allotted to learning are scarce, making it challenging to achieve important business goals and bring about significant behavioral changes. All too familiar, isn't it? The question then is, how can you measure the value offered by the learning program, to back your conviction?

Measuring the real impact of learning continues to be a tough challenge even today. There are models; there are good theories. But there is no one magic scale.

Only half the companies in Brandon Hall Group's 2019 Learning Measurement Study said they were either very effective (or at least effective) at measuring their formal learning programs. It's even worse when it comes to informal (15%) and experiential (24%) learning. That means you are not alone.

Most organizations don't have mature learning measurement strategies or approaches. Many companies focus only on basic measurements, such as course completions or learner feedback.

If you belong to this majority, this guide is to help you start the journey to join the mature minority who equate effective learning with better team performance and business outcomes – and they know how to prove it.

There is no box for you tick at the end of this guide. We only hope to set you and your organization off on the right track, without any fear of being robbed en route.

Begin with the why

Sales slipping? Too many workers slipping on the factory floor? New software being launched? The first instinct is to roll out a training program for the defined problem.

Before you rush to line up chairs in the training room or list the learning outcomes, stop and ask some hard questions.

- What is it supposed to achieve?
- How will the outcome help the business?
- Can someone help you arrive at the before and expected after numbers or define the specific expected change in behavior?

Now that you have determined the desired end results, get down to defining and listing the learning objectives which must directly correlate to those results.

One big advantage is that you always have the clipboard with the vital numbers. If you see a widening deviation from the expected outcomes, you can stop and correct the course instead of waiting for the completion of the program.

Also, at the end, you are in a better position to assess where you are, and how you can do better with your next learning initiative.

Some available evaluation model may work for you off the shelf. Most likely, you will need to make a few adaptations. Not easy, but doable. Let's see how.

UPSIDE
L E A R N I N G

No pressure
to measure

Why bother?

Have you asked or heard that question before? If you oversee the learning function and you are raising the question or are being asked that question by your boss, let's reword that question: "Why bother investing in learning?"

The only acceptable answer to the second question is, "Because it has a positive impact on our business." That

impact is essentially what you measure when you measure learning.

The seven most common reasons for not to measure, revealed by a 2019 Brandon Hall study can be compressed into two categories - we don't want to, or we don't know how.

Why we don't measure learning-induced behaviors and impact

47%	**Don't have the resources** (no time, no staff; can't find them because we don't want to)
41%	**Don't have the proper metrics** (don't know how)
39%	**We don't have the technology to support it** (don't know how)
33%	**It is too difficult to link learning to outcomes** (don't know how)
29%	**It is too difficult to assess** (don't know how and therefore don't want to)
25%	**We don't use Kirkpatrick at all** (don't want to; we will soon meet the Kirkpatrick model)
04%	**We don't see a need** (don't want to)

REF :Upside Learning. Brandon Hall Report on Real Learning Measurement: Go Beyond Checking the Box.
https://www.upsidelearning.com/custom/exclusive-brandon-hall-report-real-learning-measurement.asp

Let us go back to school and attempt a comparison. You are unlikely to progress to the next grade simply because you spent a year in class. You need to prove you your understanding of the concepts covered by passing an examination. Fast-forward to medical school. Anatomy and physiology hold no mystery for you, but unless you establish skill and knowledge in wielding the scalpel, you can't become a surgeon.

You see how the way you measure impact changes depending on what is at stake?

Yet most of us claim that we have done our job by counting the number of participants who completed the various learning programs. The toppers must have ticked all the boxes correctly, but can they sell more, ensure fewer accidents, handle the new software flawlessly, or head the team on a business trip to Japan without committing any cultural faux pas?

The days of "don't want to" are almost over, and "don't know how" is no longer a valid excuse. Even before the pandemic increased the drag on every unit of spend, a Leo Learning study in 2019 observed a "steady increase in the pressure that L&D teams face from senior stakeholders to measure the business impact of learning."

Nearly "70 percent of respondents are now feeling the pressure to measure." Do you feel it yet?

Many Methods, Many Models

Learning begins right from the time we are born. It becomes more structured and formal as time moves on. For a life essential that ought to have a place right after food, drink, shelter, sleep, and oxygen, learning has received the attention of many an expert over the years. The result has been several approaches to learning, not all of them focused on evaluation. Let us take a quick look at some of them before we discuss the prominent evaluation models in use today.

The 5 moments of Need model

Developed by Dr. Conrad Gottfredson and Bob Mosher, this is about integrating learning the process of working. The five moments of need are - New (learning how to do something for the first time), More (expanding on what is learned), Apply (acting upon what is learned), Solve (finding resolutions when problems arise), and Change (learning something new).

The ADDIE model

This is an acronym for the five basic steps in designing any learning course -Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation and Evaluation. It's more a process than a specific model because the findings from the last stage of evaluation can lead to changes in the other steps. This makes ADDIE more circular in implementation than linear.

The Decisive Dozen model

Dr. Will Thalheimer came up with 12 factors to help create "remarkably more effective learning interventions." The dozen are -

01   **Content**

02   **Exposure (grouped as Basic Enablers)**

03   **Guiding Attention**

04   **Creating Correct Concepetions**

05   **Repetition**

06   **Feedback**

07   **Variation (grouped as Creating Engagement & Understanding)**

08   **Context Alignment**

09   **Retrieval Practice**

10   **Spacing Repetitions (grouped as Supporting Remembering)**

11   **Persuasion**

12   **Perseverance (grouped as Enabling Future Application)**

This is more of a reference work than a model.

The Easterby-Smith model

In the mid-1990s Mark Easterby Smith of the University of Lancaster, put together four main strands of learning for the purposes of evaluation. These are - Proving (that the training worked or had a measurable impact); Controlling (cost, time, and access); Improving (all players, processes, and components); and Reinforcing (using evaluation as a learning contributor). This worked best when L&D comprised of mainly separate events.

The RAM approach

RAM stands for Relevance, Alignment, and Measurement. Will the learning be relevant to meeting new business opportunities and challenges? Is it aligned with the broader organization strategy? Can L&D consistently measure the impact, engagement, and transfer of learning?

Let us now examine some of the learning evaluation models in vogue.

Section 05

The Kirkpatrick Model

This was first published by Donald Kirkpatrick, former Professor Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin, in 1959. He updated it in 1975, and again in 1993. The latest revision of the model in 2016 by James (Donald's son) and his wife, Wendy, focused on making learning relevant to everyday jobs.

Given the base model is six decades old, many question its relevance when "learning and development" has replaced "training", and when it is more common for people to grab the learning they need on the go instead of formally assembling in a room.

Whether you find the Kirkpatrick Model relevant to your needs or not, the four levels of training evaluation it prescribes have been the starting point for most modern models.

1 REACTION	**2** LEARNING	**3** BEHAVIOR	**4** RESULTS
How engaged were the learners? Did they contribute? How did they react?	Has the learning helped develop the learners' skills, attitudes, knowledge, confidence and commitment?	Is the learning being put to use? (The New World version of this model stresses the importance of "required drivers" like encouragement, reinforcement and reward to motivate the desired change in behavior.)	Are the results in alignment with the desired outcomes? Is there a satisfactory return on the investment made in the training?
Satisfaction survey is the most common tool to measure reaction.	Measure the major markers of the attributes before and after the program.	Observe and interview some weeks or months after training.	Develop the right yardstick based on your goals and needs.
Most organizations measure these two levels because these are the easiest to measure. However, …		…from the business impact point of view, levels three and four are the most important. These demand a fair amount of expertise, time, and money.	

Some modern trainers use this model backward. They state the results first and then build the training that can deliver those outcomes. This helps to make the training more effective. It is important to remember that many factors other than training can influence outcome. It could be a new boss or a new location or rebooting after a pandemic.

UPSIDE
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The Phillips ROI Model

In the early 2000s, Jack Phillips added a level to the Kirkpatrick model. The new Level 5 measures return on investment, weighing the overall cost of the learning program against the monetary benefits it yields—the cost-benefit ratio of learning.

1 REACTION	**2** LEARNING	**3** BEHAVIOR	**4** RESULTS	**5** ROI

To use this model, you will need to gather quantifiable business data before, during, and after the learning program. Then you will analyze it to arrive at hard numbers for improvement in process and productivity and increase in profit.

The cost of the program could include the development cost, the delivery cost, the labor cost, and the cost of the time of the participants and the facilitators.

Phillips' Level 5 essentially attempts to express Level 4 (Results) of the Kirkpatrick Model in money terms. To arrive at the true cost-benefit ratio, it is important to isolate and eliminate any non-training factors like seasonal effects, variations in the competitive ecosystem, and regulatory changes.

The Brinkerhoff Success Case Method

In his own words, the "concept and goal" of the Success Case Method (SCM) proposed by Prof Robert Brinkerhoff is to "accelerate the pace of change and learning by studying and documenting the work of those who are using it the most and the best. Their experience is where the gold is buried."

We tend to have a few exceptional successes and a few utter failures at the two extremes, while most learning programs fall somewhere in the middle. In other words, some learners just took off thanks to the program, while a few were left untouched.

SCM is not really about the training program per se because "the success of a marriage cannot be ascertained by the quality of the wedding ceremony." Essentially, like the wedding, training is an event. It provides effective learning interventions. It is flanked by the first stage of creating focus and building intentionality (matrimonially put, gain better understanding of each other and assert commitment) and the third stage of supporting performance improvement (nurture the togetherness and help the relationship grow).

SCM involves digging deep into the extreme success stories to learn why. There are five key steps in the method.

01 Planning a focused success case study.

02 Creating an "impact model" to define what success should look like.

03 Searching for the best and worst cases using a scientific survey.

04 Interviewing and documenting success cases.

05 Communicating findings drawing conclusions, and proffering recommendations.

Section 08

The Learning Transfer Evaluation Model (LTEM)

Developed by Dr Will Thalheimer, LTEM is specifically targeted at the evaluation of learning.

Dr Thalheimer offers this as a substitute for Kirkpatrick's four levels and is careful to name LTEM's eight levels as tiers.

Let us look at LTEM before we focus on the evaluation tiers.

8	Effects of Transfer	Outcomes affecting learners, coworkers/family/friends, organization, community, society, and the environs.
7	Transfer	When learner uses what was learned to perform work tasks successfully, as demonstrated through objective measures Transfer may be assisted (with support) or full.
6	Task Competence	Learner performs relevant realistic actions and takes decisions. Task Competence measured during or right after learning may not be the right metric as the learner may forget. Therefore, *Remembered Task Competence* may be a better measure for certification.
5	Decision Making	learner makes decisions in realistic scenarios. As in the case of Task Competence, *Remembered Decision Making Competence* is a better measure.
4	Knowledge	Learner answers questions about facts/terminology. While *Knowledge Recitation* during or after the event is an inadequate measure, *Knowledge Retention* after several days is also not a good indicator if it is limited to remembering the terminology.
3	Learner Perceptions	Learner is queried to reveal insights related to learning effectiveness (like comprehension and motivation). If the queries (like satisfaction and course reputation) do not unearth insights, those yield an inadequate metric.
2	Activity	Learner engages in activities related to learning. However, measures of attention, interest, and participation may not indicate effective learning.
1	Attendance	Learner completes a learning experience. But attendance does not equal learning.

In the LTEM, tiers 5, 6, 7, and 8 can certify some degree of success in learning.

05   Do learners know what to do? (Decision Making Competence).

06   Can learners actually do what they learned how to do? (Task Competence).

07   In targeted work situations, are learners successful in using what they learned? (Transfer).

08   If learners have been successful in transfer, what effects has that transfer had on targeted and untargeted outcomes and stakeholders? (Transfer Effects).

Using a
Measurement Map

After all the theories and models, Measurement Map is one way to clearly communicate alignment between learning and business, typically on one sheet of paper.

A Measurement Map comprises four logically connected sections.

Investment	**Leading indicators**
in the learning program to drive business impact	are non-financial signs that indicate if the investment is on track

Business results	**Strategic goals**
in financial terms like sales volume and employee turnover	of the organization like profitability and customer loyalty

The process of building a Measurement Map should begin with a meeting of the L&D team with the program stakeholder and business leaders. The purpose is to align everyone with the business problem to be resolved, the metrics of success, and how the learning intervention would make it possible. In other words, this meeting should bridge learning goals and business goals. The participants must commit to sharing necessary data, decide on the evidence chain, and assume joint ownership of the program and its results.

While the initial brainstorming session might be interesting, laying down the hard metrics can be challenging.

Next, you need to identify the key performance indicators and arrange them to form a causal chain of evidence. When everyone agrees, the learning program gets a buy-in from the business stakeholders.

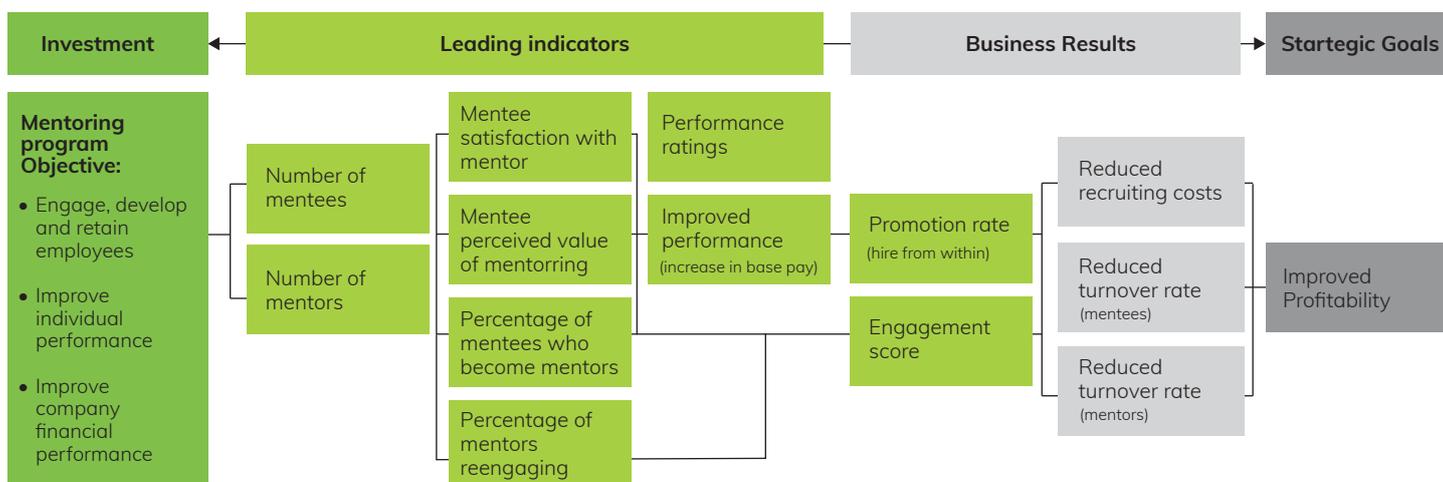A Measurement Map could be read from the right to the left. For example, a sales training map could start from the strategic goal of increasing market share and profitability, and end with learning performance objectives ranging from prospecting for customers to closing the deal.

← Read Right to Left

Investment	Leading indicators	Business Results	Startegic Goals

Selling success
- Performance objectives
- Prospect for Customers
- Identity customer wants and needs
- Master product features and usage
- Plesent and demonstrate the product
- Manage customer expectations
- Negotiate and close the deal

Number of customer contact

Appointments (#and%)

Appointment "show" rate

Product presentations (#and%)

Proposals presented (#and%)

Closing ratio

Increase new customer sales volume

Increase gross profit per sale

Increase total sales volume

Increase market share and profitability

CSI: product knowledge

CSI: build rapport

Customer satisfaction index

Number of refered customers

Number of refered customers

Increase repeat and referral sales volume

Increase gross profit per sale

Increase total gross profits

On the other hand, a map for a mentoring program could run from left to right. Following discussions with HR and business leaders, the L&D team could lay down objectives ranging from engaging, developing, and retaining employees to improving the company's financial performance. The expected business result could be reduced recruiting costs and turnover rate of both mentors and mentees.

Read Left to Right →

Investment	← Leading indicators	Business Results →	Startegic Goals

Mentoring program Objective:
- Engage, develop and retain employees
- Improve individual performance
- Improve company financial performance

Number of mentees

Number of mentors

Mentee satisfaction with mentor

Mentee perceived value of mentorring

Percentage of mentees who become mentors

Percentage of mentors reengaging

Performance ratings

Improved performance (increase in base pay)

Promotion rate (hire from within)

Engagement score

Reduced recruiting costs

Reduced turnover rate (mentees)

Reduced turnover rate (mentors)

Improved Profitability

REF :Chief Learning Officer. So you want to measure impact. Now what?
https://www.chieflearningofficer.com/2019/09/23/so-you-want-to-measure-impact-now-what/Chief Learning
Officer. So you want to measure impact. Now what?
https://www.chieflearningofficer.com/2019/09/23/so-you-want-to-measure-impact-now-what/

The map is a useful visual tool to design and execute a credible learning measurement plan that is centered on focus. As Bonnie Beresford, Director of Performance and Learning Analytics at GP Strategies, puts it, "Creating a Measurement Map is both art and science. No two maps will be alike. As long as all parties agree to the logical argument and all items are measurable, it's a good map. Start mapping and enjoy the process!"

For you, the starting point could be the case studies that we shall take up next.

UPSIDE
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Mission ATD:
skills competency to
impact capability

The mission of the Association for Talent Development (ATD) is to "Empower professionals to develop talent in the workplace."

ATD launched a global competency model in 2014 that defined the competencies needed for success, supplied a professional growth roadmap for talent development leaders and practitioners, and provided the opportunity to align individual and organizational goals against research-based industry standards.

In 2019, ATD updated its model from competency (current knowledge and skills) to capability (integrating knowledge and skills and flexing to meet future needs). The idea behind this shift was to help "talent development professionals put their knowledge and skills to work to create, innovate, lead, manage change, and demonstrate impact."

Do you think learning professionals ought to worry more about impact than the course content? How will you ensure the latter is designed to ensure the former?

Perhaps the following case study will help us understand the ATD model better.

Section 11

Case Study: Appraisal process training the ATD way

Need

Annual appraisal to be replaced with six check-in meetings every year. Provide training for this new appraisal process.

Organization background

>> 10,000 staff across 3 manufacturing units.

>> Revenues $2 billion, profits $10 million.

Challenges

>> Employees frustrated with ratings.

>> Spike in turnover within 60 days of appraisal, up to 200 departures.

>> Cost of a new hire $4,000

>> A 1% productivity gain can bring in $100,000 in profits.

>> Managers unable to set measurable goals and to redefine targets to match changing business priorities.
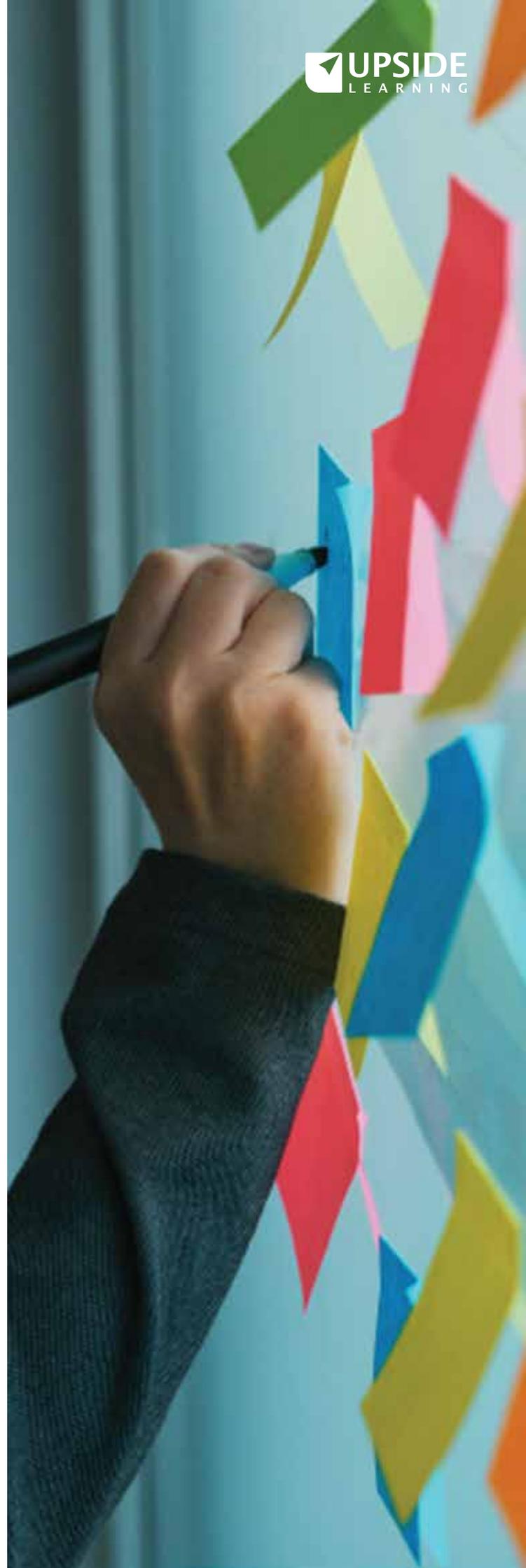
Post-training evaluation plan

Level	Data required	Data source or collection tool
1	Did managers complete the training? How do they react to it?	Learning management system data; feedback sheets
2	Can managers demonstrate the capability to use the new process?	Mock sessions
3	Are managers using the new process correctly?	Bosses of managers to observe mock sessions
4	Did productivity increase? Did staff turnover decrease?	Assess load factor; HR data

Get stakeholder buy-in for evaluation plan

» Provide complete brief about evaluation plan including metrics, data sources, and timeframes.

» Involve secondary stakeholders like the superiors of managers as their role is crucial.

Manage data collection

» Ensure accuracy and consistency of data sources

» Monitor data collection process

Analyze data

» Ensure answers to primary questions.

» Drill down for more revealing information.

	Overall	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3
Time spent	15%	5%	20%	15%
Productivity	1.5%	No Chanee	3%	1%
Turnover	12%	No Change	30%	5%
		Only 10% of the managers completed the training		Managers' bosses did not observe if the new process was being followed

Quantify benefits

» Overall, 3% productivity gain = $300,000 increase in profits.

» 30% fall in turnover; 60 fewer fresh hires = $240,000 cost savings.

» Total benefit = $540,000.

» Total cost of the program = $160,000.

» ROI = (540,000-160,000)/160,000 = 234%.

Make recommendations

» Analyze what worked and what did not.

» What needs to be finetuned to meet all business expectations?

» Explore if evaluation approach can be extended to other programs.

Your skill

Conducting the training across the organization.

Your capability

Facilitating significant positive changes in profitability, productivity and morale across the organization based on assessing the outcome of the learning.

Section 12

Case Study: General Motors measurement strategy

When General Motors' Center of Learning (GM CoL) wanted to integrate learning and the measurement of its impact with the core business, they began with two goals:

» Use learning and performance analytics to continuously improve the quality and relevance of the training it provides to its retail and wholesale field audiences.

» Build a culture that incorporates measurement thinking and evidence-based practices into all activities and training.

When you study the GM CoL measurement framework, you will notice the influence of both the Kirkpatrick Model and Phillips' ROI addition.

GM's CoL Measurement Strategy Framework

Phase	Data required	Level	Purpose
Alignment	Business alignment		Are we aligned?
Efficiency	Operational	0	How much did we deliver?
Effectiveness	Reaction	1	Did they like it?
	Learning gain	2	Did they learn it?
Job impact	Behavior change	3	Can they do it?
Business impact	Business results	4	Is it making a difference?
	ROI	5	What's the return?
	Optimization	6	How can we Improve it?

According to Brandon Hall's study of this case, "Measurement quickly became an integral part of every learning project. Today, when a learning need is identified, the project team must complete a project-intake form that addresses the alignment and level of measurement to pursue. In collaboration with business stakeholders, the project team defines the business goal the initiative supports as well as current and desired states for business-outcome measures and performance indicators."

With this model, the CoL has aligned its initiatives with GM's business objectives "in measurable ways."

Case study: campaign to influence behavior

Need

Classroom training in safety compliance to be converted into eLearning.

Challenge

Staff don't consider it necessary to comply because "our managers don't follow it."

Approach

More than an intervention event, this is a long-term learning campaign comprising spaced, incremental interventions.

Duration	Intervention goal	Key question
1 month	Awareness	What does it mean to have a culture of safety?
1 month	Preparation	Why is it important to live safety as a culture?
2 months	Motivation	How can I embody a culture of safety?
2 months	Demonstration	What is my living a safety culture story?
Continuous	Commitment and maintenance	What next?

Action

A participative campaign with plenty of visible, public interaction

Frequency	Component	Mode/platform
Once in the first month	Visual leadership messages	Mixed media animation video
Once a month for two months	Personal stories of and live interviews with staff members	Mixed media animation video
Start with once a fortnight in the second month and continue	"What's the score" scoreboards	Infographic/report-styled displays of number of incidents reported every fortnight
2 months	Social media posts from learners	Twitter, Yammer
Once a month	Safety champion of the month	Online poll

Takeaways

» Employee surveys provide valuable insights.

» Be open to making course correction in designing and implementing solutions.

» One-shot, single-intervention training not suitable to change behavior or culture.

Know your barrier, work your way around

Based on their three-year study, Leo Learning identified five major barriers to measuring learning. They also categorized the maturity level of the organization that would determine the resources available and the approach.

Maturity level	Description
Good	You need to make use of available resources and capabilities for measuring
Better	More advanced acceptance of L&D, better access to investment for metrics
Best	L&D can scale up and secure required investment to implement ideal metrics

The better the maturity level, the easier it would be to access investments, and to dismantle barriers. However, rather than fret about your organization's perceived maturity level, it is worth the effort to come up with innovative, yet practical ways to get around the barriers. Demonstrated ability to measure L&D outcome and link it to business impact primes the pump that can consistently deliver greater acceptance and funds both for learning and its measurement.

Let us look at the barriers and how best you can work to overcome those using available resources.

Bosses not convinced about measuring learning

You may think one stakeholder is on your side while the other one is hostile. Regardless, you need to be able to answer one key question: "What's the business advantage in it for me?" Prepare a small pilot measurement for a program you are about to launch. Starting with the one who commissioned the learning, use the success story to woo other managers across the organization.

No tools, no skills

Go for an intern with some data skills. Use his/ her skills to develop a strategy to put in place an implementation plan for measurement. Make sure the whole L&D team is clued in. A simple Excel spreadsheet is a good tool to start with when you are just getting started. At higher maturity levels, using data analytics tools and skills will become necessary. You should hire a skilled resource, or a member of the team will need to skill up. Also, new age LMS/LXP solutions come with better analytics tools which can help.

Where is the data?

Your LMS has loads of useful data if you look for it. Course completions, for instance, is a great place to start if you can focus on improving that metric for non-mandatory courses. How can that help, you wonder?

Let us assume your primary intent is to improve completion rates. Now, you uncover possible reasons for the low rates - not well designed, not available on the right devices, not available in the right sizes, not available when needed, not aligned with the employees' needs, and so on.

Start work on those. That is sure to help you come up with a better program, more likely to have a measurable impact, the next time. Now, isn't that a great way to start your learning measurement activity?

So, start with completion rate. As long as you don't stop there but instead use it as a launching pad, your exciting learning analytics journey is sure to take off.

Hre is some data, now what?

If you can isolate the data that pertains to learning alone, you can measure and thereby improve the L&D data process and efficiency. That's a great start! Study the data for real or potential impact on a business goal or goals.

Is there a measurable positive change that can be attributed to the learning outcome alone? Look back and see how you would have designed the program differently, if you had a clear idea of the business results you were expected to help achieve.

Once you embark on this journey of correlating learning data (pre-and post-program) with business data, you are well on your way. Yes, it will require more resources, but given the real results you are delivering, you will be in a better position to ask for and acquire those resources.
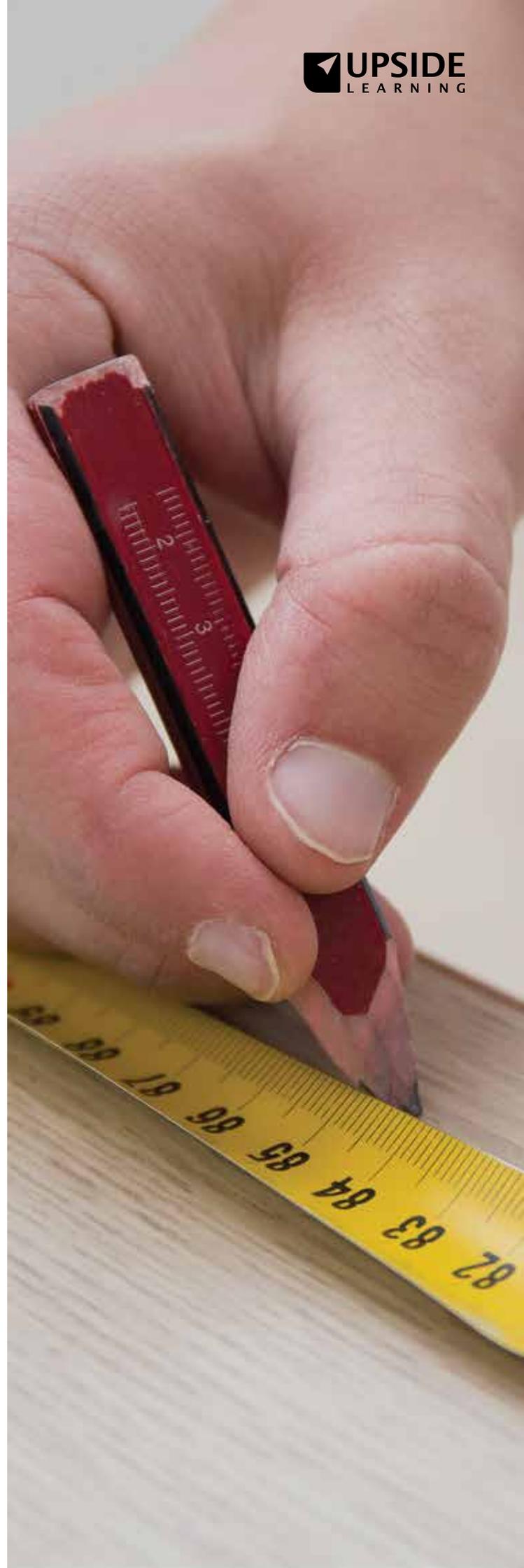
Section 15

Gauge Desired Outcome, and Learn to Measure Up to It

This guide cannot end with a generic prescription, because there just isn't one. Every organization has a different goal, and must design its learning to fit that need.
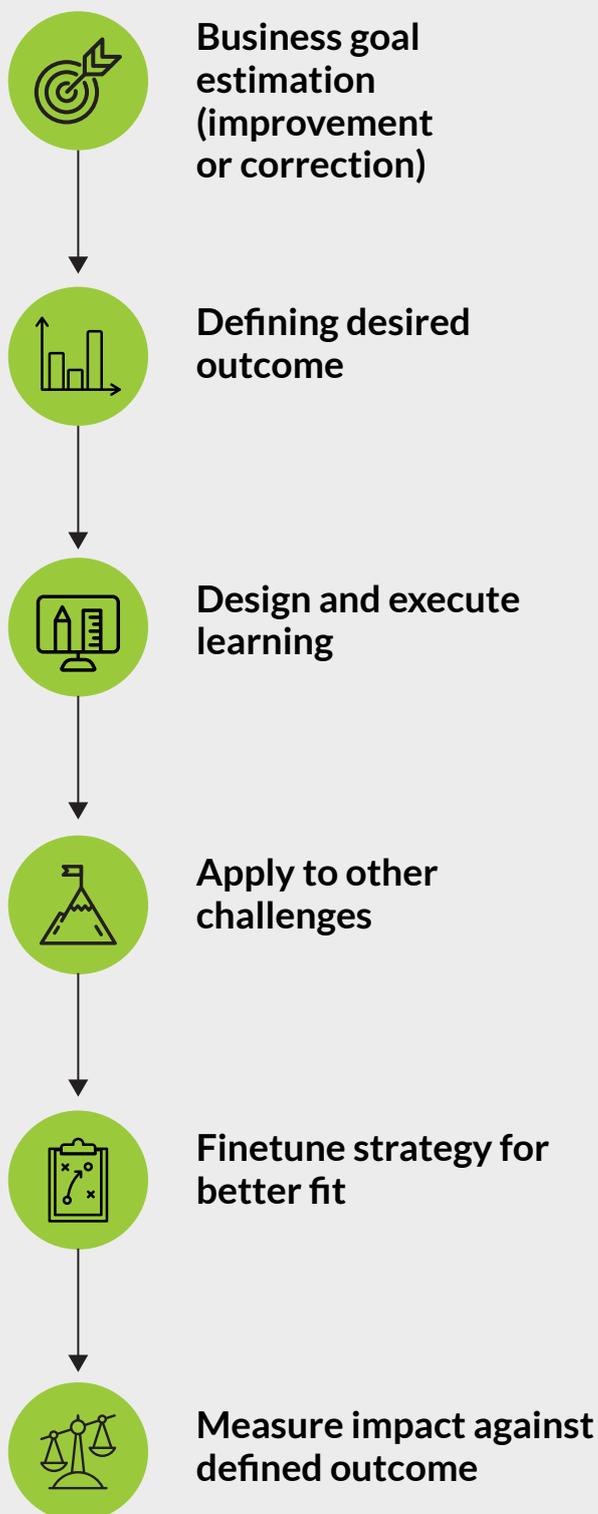
As Simon Brown, the Chief Learning Officer of Novartis puts it, "L&D's upskilling and reskilling programs should always be tied to key business priorities. We have two:

01   Attracting and retaining the best talent

02   Building the capabilities needed to support the strategy.

To help us do that effectively, we have started to embed learning leads into our strategy teams so that we can identify the skills we'll need several years out and create a plan on how to close them."

Let us try putting it another way.

Business goal estimation (improvement or correction)

↓

Defining desired outcome

↓

Design and execute learning

↓

Apply to other challenges

↓

Finetune strategy for better fit

↓

Measure impact against defined outcome

The first question you need to ask is not what training you need, but what is the business issue the learning needs to resolve.

Before you get lost in the numbers, remember that there is also a significant qualitative aspect to measuring learning impact. Are people talking about the benefits? Has learning become a painless, ingrained corporate habit?

Learning often manifests as an improvement in the quality of inter-employee interaction ("May I help you with that?" versus "Not my job!"), and the level of discussion during meetings (problem-solving versus finger-pointing, proactive value addition versus responsibility shirking). Keep your ears tuned, and encourage informal feedback from managers. Every business activity has a maturation date, and learning is no different. Let it not drift as an amorphous, good-to-have activity, with vague impact. Encourage questions, and be open to changes if desired results are not achieved on time.

While the simple, linear approach (Problem ---> Learning intervention ---> Solution) might work well in the academic setting, it needs to be more iterative in the business world (Problem ---> Learning intervention ---> Outcome ---> Learning from outcome ---> Solution).

You may have sophisticated analytical ability in-house that can help you with the metrics. While that would be a big help, regardless of the statistical prowess at your command, make sure you have learning champions among the leaders. Take pains to explain to those who have settled on the fence why outcome-driven learning is not an employee-welfare cost but an investment in better business results.

What Peter Drucker had said, "If it cannot be measured, it cannot be managed," applies to every business function including learning. And anything that cannot be managed cannot survive.

REMEMBER

» Talk to your fellow leaders and managers and arrive at outcome-specific metrics.

» Start planning your learning program only after you have and understand the metrics.

» Match your learning objectives to the expected business or behavior outcomes.

» Measure learning outcomes meaningfully.

» Establish a causal link between learning and positive impact on business.

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Amit has been involved in the workplace learning domain for over 19 years. He is passionate about improving organisation performance through better learning solutions.

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