How to Choose A Training Provider That Will Make A Lasting Impact
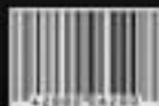
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What's this guide about?

There are two kinds of training out there: the kind that makes a lasting impact, and the kind that doesn't.

That's true whether you're investing in training for one person, a team, or even an entire organization. There can be serious problems with the way training is traditionally done! Some training is built to last, and some training is built to make little to no difference. That's no accident.

Now, not everybody cares about producing lasting change. Some companies throw money at training every once in a while to take the pressure off of an uncomfortable situation, to point the blame away from an incompetent executive, or to produce a quick, temporary morale boost. They want to put on a Band-Aid, look the other way, and call it a day.

But if you're reading this guide, that's probably not what you're about. In fact, that kind of behavior probably rankles the heck out of you...

...because you're one of those people who sees the lasting value (read: ROI) that effective training could provide—if you knew where to *really* look or what to *really* look for.

If effective training is what you or your company is about, then you need to be prepared.

The purpose of this report is to take you through an inquiry that will help you separate the training investments that are worth your company's time, effort, energy, and money from those that are just not.

By the end of this report, you'll be able to evaluate training programs according to what matters most—how likely it is that they can help you achieve your key objectives.

There's a catch, though. This report is going to present ideas and ask some questions that may challenge your long-standing beliefs.

But if you're serious about engaging in training that makes a lasting impact for yourself, your team, or your organization... and if you're serious about finding the right training provider to partner with... then this guide will be an invaluable resource.

Below you'll find questions in bold, meant for you to answer. Answering them will help you find the right training, and the right training provider, for you. You'll find some guidelines and thought-provoking perspectives in there too, but it's the questions that are most important. **If you've read through this special report and still have more questions, feel free to give us a call at 732-385-1522**.

What's the purpose of training?

At the core, the purpose of training is to enable people to be significantly and consistently more effective in a specific area. Doing that means modifying attitudes and behaviors, so that outcomes that were previously difficult to achieve now become possible or even likely.

And that's the most important criterion to use when evaluating a prospective training provider: **how likely is it that this company will enable my people to be significantly and consistently more effective in the area I want to focus on?**

Asking that question begins a two-part inquiry. The first part is to truly understand your own objectives. The second part is to determine the training provider that would be the best fit to help you achieve those objectives.

Understanding your own objectives: what's your real reason for training?

If you want your training to make a lasting difference, you'll first want to hone in on the challenges you're running into. **What are the problems you want solved?** These could be areas that aren't working *at all* or areas that simply aren't working to your satisfaction.

Here are some examples of clear, well-articulated problems:

- ✓ our team experiences daily internal conflict that takes away from our ability to meet our deadlines, produce quality work, and start meetings on time

- ✓ my engineers are not accustomed to getting products out on time or surpassing expectations

- ✓ three of my employees consistently piss important customers off

- ✓ we're $3 million over budget and six months behind our project milestones

- ✓ this is the third straight month we've exceeded our sales figures and we want to maintain, or even exceed, that kind of performance

- ✓ hitting our monthly sales goals over the last year has been erratic and undependable; it's a matter of luck whether or not we'll hit next month's goals

- ✓ employee turnover in our organization is 46%, in an industry where the average is 25%, and that costs us $7 million

- ✓ the employees on my team are drained and over-worked—they are not producing a sufficient amount of quality work in a timely manner

Notice you're not brainstorming solutions like "communication skills training," "soft skills," "team building," "sales training," or "organizational development." Those phrases don't explain what's really going on, what you really need, or what you'd really like to see happening among your people.

What you really want to do is make a list of the problems that, if solved, would give you the most bang for your buck (read: highest ROI). Once you've established the problems you want addressed, you can then begin to identify your ideal training objectives. That's when it makes sense to ask: **What are important objectives that, if achieved, would make a substantial positive impact on bottom-line performance?**

Would you like your team to meet its deadlines...or even beat them? Would you like your team to finish a project early and under budget? Do you want external support to complete a

big project that's way behind its milestones and way over budget?

Do you want your people to get along better? To collaborate with and help each other instead of taking sides and arguing over petty differences? Do you want to reduce or eliminate office tension and politics?

Do you want to create an atmosphere of high energy and motivation that lasts over time? To create a culture of sustainable high performance or creativity, without respect to personalities? Do you want your people to be proactive in finding ways to improve the way business is done?

Do you want everyone to lighten up and have more fun, so that you can attract dedicated people willing to work longer, harder, and for less pay? Do you want to lower turnover by enabling your team to go home and regularly say, "That was a great day at work—I made a difference for my colleagues and my customers"?

The more specific you can be in identifying what results you really want, the more likely you can tailor training to achieve those objectives.

The bonus is that if you engage in the right kind of training, you can actually achieve many of these benefits simultaneously. But it all starts with clarifying your most important training objective.

As soon as you've gotten 100% clear on what kind of an impact you're really looking for, the next step is to identify the training that will make that lasting difference.

Evaluating your prospective training providers: what's out there?

A good place to start is to reflect on your prior experiences with training. Follow along with these questions and be sure to answer them yourself as you're going through them.

What kind of training have you done before?

You may have experienced motivational speeches, lectures, large seminars, small workshops, or even one-on-one work. What would be most effective for your needs?

Motivational speeches are great at energizing groups. They're also great at reinforcing beliefs. An excellent keynote or motivational speech will capture attention, teach a valuable lesson, and open a window of possibility for audience members to apply that lesson in their own lives.

But no matter how good the speaker is, a speech *alone* is terrible at reinforcing and sustaining energy and opportunity over time. In most cases, that window shuts after 3 days... a week, tops. Then, it's back to normal. The only thing that usually changes is an additional sense of failure over a missed opportunity to produce desired results.

Lectures, where a teacher stands in front of a room and tells an audience what they need to know, are primarily useful for educating large groups of people. If your objective requires exposing your organization to important information, then lectures provide a traditional, quick, and easy approach.

But lectures are simply not effective for behavior modification or skill practice. That makes sense, too. There's no emotional engagement—only an opportunity to absorb information.

What's surprising (or maybe not at all...) is that lectures aren't even an effective tool for absorbing information. Audience members typically only remember 62% of the material by the end of the lecture. Without review and practice, those numbers drop...*fast*. After 3-4 days, retained knowledge drops to 55%, and after two months 76% is gone (although a different study suggests that after *only one month, just 2-3% of the original lecture is retained*).

Large seminars, structured and facilitated effectively, enable you to learn from the successes and challenges of others (instead of just trying to absorb the teacher's knowledge). While seminars may involve some lecture, the focus is really on creating an environment where many people can learn from each other. That often includes partner drills, audience participation, and "hot seats" with volunteers. The value of hot seats is enormous: one volunteer sharing a challenge in front of an entire room can impact *everyone*.

Small workshops function similarly to large seminars, except in a more intimate classroom setting. The main benefit of a smaller group is that the facilitator can offer personalized attention to more people.

Adventure/ropes courses and multi-day retreats use experiential learning to teach participants about teamwork and leadership. These courses create the right environment for team bonding. Since a bond is an emotional experience, and emotional experiences are required to effectively modify behavior, these kind of programs *do* help teams to get along better.

The real question is: how well does a fun time at a ropes course translate into consistent excellent on-the-job performance?

When you take people out of their element to instill in them new behaviors, how are their new behaviors reinforced when they're back in the old environment?

Has anything changed about their work environment that would maintain or promote their new effective behaviors? If nothing changes and your organization goes back to their normal routine, how long can any heightened level of performance last?

How effective was the program in making a lasting impact?

Many people finish a training program and within three days (a week, if they're especially driven), they return to the same habits and behavior patterns they had before the training.

That "back-to-normal barrier" is... really normal. Studies show that it takes about 30 days to modify habits. It's human nature to go back to your old habits, especially when you return to the same environment where those habits were reinforced.

In order for a training program to make a lasting impact for its participants, it has to support participants over time as they build new behavior patterns. That means helping them overcome the "back-to-normal barrier."

And that's one of the most important criteria of success that many training programs completely lack—they're not set up to consistently reinforce the training when participants go

back to their day-to-day work environments.

What was missing that would have enabled it to make a lasting impact?

Reinforcement doesn't just mean multiple trainings over a longer period of time, weekly meetings with a facilitator, or individual/small group work with a coach. Those are examples of what reinforcement can look like on a calendar, but those examples don't describe how to make reinforcement more or less effective.

The secret to effective training and reinforcement is based on simple principles that are the foundation for human effectiveness.

Here's the cool part. If you're familiar with these principles, you can actually *evaluate training methodologies* to infer in advance whether a program will make the lasting difference you want it to make. And what you find might surprise you.

What elements need to be in place in order to make a lasting impact?

Here's what you need to know about these principles:

In order to produce the outcomes that are important to us, we have to take actions. Actions produce results. Given consistent action and enough time, those results will accumulate until we achieve a desired objective.

So how do you get people to consistently take the right actions over a long enough period of time? How do you encourage the right behavior?

The usual approach to changing behavior involves changing the consequences of that behavior. Sometimes positive incentives (like the "praise and raise") are effective. Sometimes negative consequences (like the threat of being laid off) do the job. Sometimes people will take the right actions without needing any incentives.

But sometimes, incentives just don't work at all to change long-term behavior patterns.

That leads us to a really important question: what's the difference between someone who takes desired actions freely and easily, and someone who doesn't? What's the missing piece?

Mindsets. Attitudes. Beliefs.

See, changing behavior patterns is not just about altering the consequences. It's not just about continual reinforcement. It's also about shifting attitudes.

It's the attitudes we have that make us more (or less) likely to consistently take the right actions over time.

Our attitudes and beliefs determine the actions we take. If you need any evidence of that, recall how you behaved the last time you were angry, and contrast that with how you acted the last time you were deliriously happy...

...or the difference in performance when you worked on a project because it's what you'd been told to do, versus when it inspired you so much that you could hardly go to sleep at night with all the excitement you were trying to contain.

Can you see that actions flow directly from your mindset? If you're energized about a task—whether it's writing TPS reports, talking to prospects, or working out a miscommunication with a colleague—it gets done quickly and proficiently.

In contrast, resistance makes it harder to take action. Someone experiencing resistance around a task is less likely to get it done well, get it done in a timely fashion, or get it done at all.

Many training providers have a real problem helping their participants overcome resistance. That's because many programs out there focus solely on teaching new methods on "how to" do something, like how to communicate, how to sell, or how to manage a project.

Sure, teaching new methods is important and useful...but a "how to" approach is not enough. That approach only teaches actions without dissolving resistance or fear. So, it's unlikely that newly-learned behaviors will be implemented effectively and in a way that lasts—if they're implemented at all.

A great example is losing weight: virtually everyone knows how to do it, yet many have enormous difficulty actually following through. "How to"-only training providers are the workplace equivalent of hiring a nutritionist to plan your diet when your core attitudes or beliefs about a new diet has not shifted. A few days after your session, it's still highly likely you'll revert to your original behavior patterns.

In contrast, when you invest in training programs that align attitudes and beliefs with key objectives, the important actions come abundantly, consistently, and with less effort. Then, followup reinforcement of that training program has a specific, clear purpose. Its focus becomes about dismantling the obstacles that got in the way.

So, a robust approach to training and reinforcement has to minimally take three pieces into account to make a lasting impact:

1) instructions and practice on how to achieve a certain objective (behavioral)

2) 2) an experience that engages participants and a system that keeps them engaged over time (mental/emotional)

3) 3) a long-term framework for effectively dealing with inevitable problems and failures (mental/emotional and behavioral)

Choosing the right provider: why work with The Round Well?

Following these principles, you can still offer training programs on any topic, to any employee, from here on out until the sky falls and the cows come home.

Please don't do that. Overloading on training is just as big of a mistake as engaging in irrelevant or ineffective training.

You're not a school intent on teaching your employees everything there is to know about how to be better. You're a business. If you can demonstrate that training will help you achieve a specific, valuable objective with a sufficiently high ROI, then you have a strong case to train

your people.

That's a process we can help you with.

We don't focus on using the newest buzzwords or snazziest sales presentations. Instead, our company operates by the 80/20 rule, which says that 80% of your results come from 20% of your efforts. When your approach focuses on improving the 20% that matters most, you get a bigger ROI.

That's what we're about: helping you find your 20%--your key objectives--and then training your team to work together effectively to achieve those outcomes.

We call that increasing employee performance. Depending on the situation, it could take on names or forms like leadership development, team building, or employee engagement.

But what it really means to you is the accomplishment of key objectives like completing important projects on time or under budget, exceeding specific performance expectations, empowering your employees to produce quality work together, or even lowering employee turnover.

What's Next?

Remember when you were asked, "**What are important objectives that, if achieved, would make a substantial positive impact on bottom-line performance?**"

Well, it's time to let you in on a secret: key objectives *tend* to be hidden from your team's point of view.

You may not be aware of your most valuable ROI opportunities or most important goals... or even imagine there are better objectives for your team to focus on.

These areas, where you don't know what you don't know, are called blind spots.

They're entirely normal. But they make your team less effective by biasing your team's attention to only the objectives perceived to be valuable, instead of the objectives that may actually be more valuable but that nobody spotted yet.

Oftentimes, identifying these blind spots is as simple as talking to the right third party.

That's what we'd like to offer you for getting this far. We're committed to doing our part to help you figure out what those blind spots could be, so you can identify the true opportunities worth your investment in training.

For a no-cost, no-obligation exploratory consultation of your key objectives, hidden or obvious, call our office at 732-385-1522. We promise the conversation will make a lasting impact.