

Evaluation of Training (Part 1 of 4)

By ATCEN

Human resource development is an important function in any organization, big or small. It motivates the staff and at the same time ensures that the organization will always have skilled workforce. In the daily process of planning for staff training, one of the more important tasks to be carried out in the training cycle is training evaluation. In the area of training evaluation, there are four outcomes to look at; namely reaction, learning, behavior and results. In these series of articles, we will look at Level One to Level Four of Donald Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model and how it can be implemented successfully.

The first level, or Level 1 is known as the evaluation of reaction. The reaction here would be the participants' reaction to the training program. These reactions are measured at the end of the program through evaluation forms given out to all the participants. Besides evaluating the participants' reaction to the overall program, the evaluation should also include measurement of the trainer, the topic and the training environment, and equipment used. These topics can be broken further into subtopics e.g. the trainer's presentation, ability of answer questions and interaction with the participants.

The reason why we measure the participants' reaction is to gauge the level of positive attitude the participants have towards the training program. If there are positive reactions, then learning and transfer of learning is more likely to happen. Also, unpopular trainers or training programs are likely to be eliminated first by managers. Finally, the evaluation helps identify various training aspects that can be improved in the future.

Level one evaluation is usually done through the use of a questionnaire. In the questionnaire, it is very important to include close-ended questions (including a rating scale) as well as open-ended questions. For the close-ended items, it is recommended to use "neutral" instead of "agree" in the center of a five-point rating scale. For the open-ended items, some of the more important open-ended questions ask about the strengths and weaknesses of the training program. It is necessary to ask these questions in order to improve the program. When filling out the questionnaires, it is always better not to have the participants' names on it to ensure anonymity. When participants are assured of anonymity, they will be more honest with their answers.

Here are a few advantages of level one evaluation:

1. You will know how the participants felt about the training event.
2. It may point out content areas that trainees felt were missing from the training event.
3. It will tell you how engaged the participants felt by the training event.
4. It can provide information about overall participants' reaction as well as participants' feedback and evaluation of specific aspects of the training event.
5. Detailed level one evaluation can provide decisive evaluation information that can be used to improve future versions of the training program (e.g., you can fix the things the participants disliked

about the program and add the things they felt was missing).

Finally, it is always important to communicate the results to the management because utilization of evaluation results will not happen without dissemination and communication.