

Knowledge Worker

Upping the ROI of Your Training Department

(September 2020)

Chances Are . . .

Chances are, you're not getting as much value out of your training department as you could.

Chances are, a lot of what your training department does adds little or no value. It's a waste of time, money, energy and resources.

Chances are, you already know both those things but you're not having much luck in doing anything about it.

Well, you're in luck now, because this piece lays out some things you can do to improve the situation.

Change its Name

First, change the name of the Training Department to the Department of Training and Human Performance. We don't train people for the sake of training them; we train them to improve their performance and the name of the unit should make that clear. Besides, the name change will signal to all that something else is afoot and that's good.

Expand its Scope

Once you change the name of the department, expand its scope. Human performance depends in part on the individual and in part on that individual's environment. Often an individual knows how to perform but is precluded from doing so by environmental influences. Expand the scope of the Training and Human Performance Department to include looking into and taking care of those environmental factors that affect performance. Performance is a function of individual and environmental factors. That can be expressed as $P = f(I, E)$. Expand the scope of the Training and Human Performance Department to include E as well as I.

Expand its Capabilities

Talk is cheap. Now it's time to act. It's time to invest in the newly named department so it can make good on the inclusion of environmental factors in its area of responsibility. That means training some of your existing staff in Human Performance Technology and perhaps bringing on board some from the outside. And, if you already have some HPT folks on staff, make them a part of the new department. Remember: If you want to up the ROI of your training department, you're going to have to invest in doing that. Nothing is free.

Promote its Utilization

Make it clear throughout your organization that changes are underway. The training department is on its way to becoming a much more valuable resource, instead of a necessary evil. It is being poised to make significant contributions, not simply incur costs. When successes are realized – and they will be realized – give them good publicity. Encourage managers and executives throughout the company to consult and engage in discussions with the new and different training department. They need to get in the habit of talking with one another.

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Establish a Community of Performance Improvement Professionals

Chances are, your organization has several different kinds of Performance Improvement Professionals. First are the trainers and human performance technologists we've just been discussing. Add to those the process improvement folks, the quality and Six Sigma people, the systems development people, the organization development (OD) practitioners and, of course, managers and executives. These folks should all be talking to one another about their challenges, issues, concerns, practices, problems and how they can be of assistance and value to one another. The introduction of a new system or process, for example, typically requires some training. That new system should be examined from the perspective of its effects on the performance of people, processes and the organization. Introducing it is an exercise in change management and the OD folks can probably help with that. In short, you need to integrate and align the efforts of all those performance improvement professionals and the new Training and Human Performance Department is a good place to start setting those alignment wheels in motion.

About the Author

Fred Nickols is a toolmaker, a knowledge worker, a solution engineer, a writer, a consultant, and a former executive who spent 20 years in the U.S. Navy, retiring as a decorated Chief Petty Officer. In the private sector, he worked as a consultant and then held executive positions with two former clients. Currently, Fred is *Chief Toolmaker* and *Lead Solution Engineer* at [Distance Consulting LLC](#). His web site is home to the award-winning [Knowledge Workers' Tool Room](#) and more than 200 free articles, book chapters and papers. Fred writes this column on a monthly basis. All previous Knowledge Worker columns are accessible by clicking [here](#).