

# Developing Employee Training Programs That Meet Organizational Goals

JANUARY 31, 2020

In spite of the historically low unemployment rate, the dire warnings sounded by broadcast media and in business and industry publications would make one think the American workforce is in near shambles. Headlines plucked from reports published by research firms and economic-development entities call out the seemingly grim reality: “Four out of five CEOs consider their employees’ lack of essential skills as a threat to growth,” according to the 22nd Annual Global CEO Survey from PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). A 2018 report from ManpowerGroup Solutions states, “Skills Shortage Continues to Negatively Impact American Employers.”

There is a pressing need for organizations to address their skills gap, and it is this need that drives the demand for employee training programs. The 2017 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends Report called out the need for organizations to offer employees continuous skills development: “As companies build the organization of the future, continuous learning is critical for business success. For today’s digital organizations, the new rules call for a learning and development organization that can deliver learning that is always on and always available.”

The paradox for learning and development professionals is this: If the need to address the skills gap is so urgent, why are so many executives and managers skeptical about the effectiveness of training programs?

A quick Google search will produce a trove of articles and opinions on why employee training programs are ineffective; it is enough to make any manager think twice about allocating scarce budget dollars to upskilling employees. Despite the clamorous and pessimistic voices that warn of training program failure, organizational spending per learner on training continues to climb. According to Training Magazine’s 2019 Training Industry Report, companies, on average, spent \$1,286 per learner in 2019 compared with \$986 per learner in 2018 — an increase of 30%.

The bottom line is this: In an effort to address the persistent skills gap that hinders many aspects of their organizational effectiveness, executives continue to allocate increasing amounts of budget dollars to train employees. So why then are training programs often perceived to be falling short of expectations?

## Some of The Oft-Cited Reasons Why Employee Training Programs Fail to Produce the Desired Results Are:

- **The organization neglected to conduct a needs assessment before delivering training.**  
This may be the biggest contributing factor to the failure of employee training programs. The needs assessment is the first step in any successful upskilling program; its main purpose is to ensure that the employee training programs delivered address the organization's immediate business need (e.g., improve customer service, reduce production errors, increase teamwork and collaboration). The needs assessment will also indicate which employees require the training. A skills gap analysis, which goes hand in hand with the needs assessment, will reveal the current state of employees' skills, knowledge and performance and make a comparison to the desired level. This analysis is crucial in helping program designers ascertain how much of the training different employees require, and what type and mode of training is most relevant.

---

A needs assessment identifies what the organization needs and precedes the gap analysis, which determines how to close the gap between where the organization is currently and where they want or need to be.

---

- **The organization failed to communicate the relevancy and goals of the training to learners.**  
Successful training programs start with employee buy-in and engagement, which is a result, in part, of managerial influence and communication. When managers are fully behind the training, they communicate why they and the organization value the training and what is expected of learners. When learners fully understand the expectations of the training and the measurable outcomes desired, they become engaged with the process.
- **New learning was not reinforced after the training.**  
The reality is without reinforcement, learning and new skills dissipate quickly, becoming ignored, underutilized and eventually lost. Why? Studies based on the [Ebbinghaus forgetting curve](#) suggest that humans forget approximately 50% of new information within an hour of learning it and up to 70% within 24 hours. Add to that dynamic the fact that in today's workplace, most employees are faced with an overwhelming onslaught of organizational demands and process-oriented tasks that keep them fully occupied, which makes implementing new skills difficult. To maintain new skills and knowledge that are intended to impact business measurements, it is important that the organization provide ongoing learning opportunities that reinforce and enhance the training delivered. The lesson here is simple: Training should never be viewed as a one-and-done event.

- **The organization neglected to conduct a thorough post-training assessment.**

A post-training assessment should gather data on what employees learned, if they applied the learning, and the impact of learning on business measurements. It is simply not adequate to report that learners “enjoyed” or “liked” the training. Only by taking a post-training program assessment several levels beyond learners’ “reaction” can the organization create a feedback loop that provides continuous improvement to the design, delivery and implementation of training programs.

---

According to Training Magazine’s 2019 Training Industry Report, the highest priorities for training in terms of allocating resources in 2020 are:

1. Increasing the effectiveness of training programs (37%)
  2. Measuring the impact of training programs (18%)
  3. Reducing costs/improving efficiency (14%)
- 

Continuously enhancing employees’ skills through well-designed training programs is critical to an organization’s success. The best training programs contribute to increased employee engagement and retention and measurably enhance productivity, innovation, teamwork, communication and organizational efficiency — all of which tend to make for happy, satisfied customers. What are the secrets of successful employee training programs?

### Successful Training Programs Are Based on The Following Best Practices:

- A thorough needs assessment and skills gap analysis are the foundation for the design of relevant, engaging and effective training programs that are aligned with organizational goals.
- Based on the needs assessment and gap analysis, managers establish clear and well-defined learning objectives that give learners an expectation of the knowledge and skills they should acquire during the training. Those expectations are communicated to learners well before the training.
- C-level commitment to the training is communicated well before the training takes place, which demonstrates leadership buy-in.
- The organization looks beyond the initial training and provides continuous, flexible learning opportunities that reinforce the skills and knowledge acquired.
- A post-training assessment is given that evaluates what employees learned, the probability they will implement the new skills, and the impact the training has had on business measurements.

Additionally, the post-training assessment identifies any barriers learners may face that could impede the implementation of new skills.

## Outsourcing as a Strategy to Improve the Effectiveness Of Employee Training Programs

Because of the rapid pace of change within the business environment, the diverse learning needs of the multigenerational workforce, and the complexities of learning strategies, the demands and pressures on internal learning and development (L&D) staff are greater than ever. What happens when your internal resources do not have the bandwidth or expertise to meet the training needs of marketing, IT, management, sales and customer service? What happens if hiring more L&D staff is not an option? Which business goals will go unmet?

For organizations of all sizes, outsourcing all or part of the L&D function is becoming an increasingly attractive strategic option to address the following issues:

- **The internal L&D department has become stale or resistant to change.**  
An outsourced corporate training partner can bring fresh new insights and expertise to an internal department that has lost its edge. If your current L&D staff is overwhelmed by trying to absorb new learning strategies, conducting needs assessments and skills gap analysis for multiple lines of business, or deciding which combination of learning modalities will produce the desired results, an experienced training partner can be a valuable asset.
- **In-house staff cannot keep up with the pace of change.**  
A responsive and experienced training partner can quickly assemble the resources needed — the facilitators, program designers and subject matter experts — to help your organization deliver the diverse training programs required by your stakeholders. Whether your training needs are being driven by new regulations, deployment of new technologies or organizational change, an outsourced training partner can take the tremendous pressure off your staff and help ensure your people are getting the enhanced skills they need to perform at their optimal levels.
- **Cost reductions.**  
Contracting for outsourced training expertise is a variable cost. The design and delivery of employee training programs is a variable activity that can be scaled up or down as demand dictates. The cost of full-time internal staff is a constant, fixed cost that does not fluctuate with the demand cycles for training.
- **Organizational transformation.**  
An ongoing, dynamic relationship with an outsourced corporate training partner can help sustain a continuous learning environment within your business, transforming it into a learning organization. A learning organization is defined by its ability to quickly acquire knowledge that enables it to innovate and meet the challenges of a rapidly changing environment. In his seminal book “The Fifth Discipline,” Peter M. Senge, author and founding chair of the Society

for Organizational Learning, states, “The organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap into people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization.”

---

*“In the past, employees learned to gain skills for a career; now, the career itself is a journey of learning.” — 2017 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends*

---

### Start a Training Partnership With Tombolo Institute

By partnering with Tombolo Institute, you will have access to the vast resources of a renowned educational institution including subject matter experts, facilitators and program designers who have extensive industry experience. Additionally, we are experts in conducting [needs assessments](#) that ensure training is the right solution for the business problems you seek to address. Because we are agile, responsive and experienced, we can quickly assemble the experts you need to design, manage and implement the mission-critical training programs that will help move your organization forward. [Contact us](#) today.