

## **Training For Change: Think Performance Need First Not Training**

**- Dr. Madan Manandhar<sup>1</sup>**

**Remember, training is not what is ultimately important,...performance is.”**

**- Marc Rosenberg ( 1991)**

(The author is especially pleased to write this article on `Training for Change`, a process where he has been immersed in, as trainer, over two decades. The author started the trainer job when `chalk and talk` was still popular. Training was then treated essentially a passive process; the trainer knew best! Consequently, the result was often something to be suffered, and the best that could be said for it was that it was merely a `break` for trainees from work. Most people, often tend to hold the view that training is unnecessary, is costly in terms of money and time, is divorced from the ground reality, is usually done for wrong reasons or in the wrong ways and is far from having proved its value. These arguments are partly right and partly wrong. These are partly right in the sense that training has not been designed and conducted in the way it should be. These are partly wrong in the sense that people expect too much from training without considering its technical and non technical limitations. We felt impulsively that there had to be a better way; a way that encouraged `active` learning. The arrival of participatory and computer based learning methods signaled this for us and we have been committed to developing training activities in this mould ever since.)

### **Introduction**

1. For too long the human resources development (HRD) managers or people in training profession in particular has focused on the activity of training; people in the profession thought of themselves as specialists associated with some aspect of learning, such as, designing the courses, delivering the programs, or identifying the needs. Indeed, we must have shifted from focusing on what people need to learn (training) to what they must do (performance).
2. Unfortunately, what we in the human resource development (HRD) field have been doing for many years is not working, if “working” is defined as

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<sup>1</sup> Director, Consulting Services Department at NASC.

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changing human performance. Clientele organizations in general do not ask us to deliver what they need; they ask us to deliver what they believe we can provide. And what we are asked to provide –training – is often ineffective, unnecessary, and expensive. Occasionally it is even harmful. We do just what we are asked to do – deliver training. In most cases, we do not do what we are not asked to do – i.e., improve human performance in the workplace.

3. What has been most heartening is that most of the organizations have still felt that training is important, have invested a lot and taken pains to organize training for their personnel either by engaging outside help, or by conducting in-house training by themselves or by nominating their personnel to outside institutions/programmes in the country or abroad.
4. Ask them how satisfied they are with these programmes, and the feedback is generally positive for most of the times, such as - "It has been the best training programme by the best people". But ask them about the effectiveness of these programmes to help improve the staff work performance have they contributed to their bottom line in some manner, have they created some difference, have their desired objectives being achieved, are they are truly happy with the change that has been brought about?
5. In most cases, we either get no response or at best some blank looks! No wonder then, for many organizations, training is not an investment, but an expense. It is jus a balance sheet, full of statistics to be presented in the annual progress reports- a feeling good factor- a self assurance- that we are a client focused learning organization!
6. No wonder then, that though we have huge marketing and market promotion budgets to arm us against competition, we either have no training budgets or very low training budgets, or unutilized and unspent training budgets. And this to our common minds is quite justified, because all along, training has in no way contributed to organizational effectiveness, or has made no visible difference in our organizational work performance. This situation cannot continue. In today's right-sized, de-layered, and re-engineered organizations, people are being asked to do more and more. The performance demands placed on employees are growing; the work they are asked to do is changing. The world is changing

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and HRD must change with it. Every [HRD](#) and training professional who wants to have a meaningful and satisfying job must take it seriously.

7. In the book, *Training for Impact: How to Link Training to Performance needs and Measure the Results* (Robinson and Robinson, 1989), the authors describes how to deliver a specific training programme so that it results in performance change. What struck us was the number of people in the HRD field who think of themselves as Traditional Trainers, focusing on the identification of what people must learn and then responding to that need. When people see themselves this way, they often find it uncomfortable or impossible to do what is required if training is to result in performance change. And, various researches on training impact clearly indicate that the results from this traditional trainer role are insufficient if we, as professionals in the HRD field, are to be truly helpful to our clientele organizations.
8. For over three decades, Tom Gilbert has advocated performance analysis based upon rigorous examination of exemplary performers. He has argued that it is not enough to ask trainee employees what they do; instead, the trainer/analyst must observe their performance. Geary Rummler (1989, pp.43, 44) states that "training alone is almost never an appropriate cure". He advocates that trainers should "use a rigorous approach of a systems engineer to analyze organizational behavior and design programs that change or improve staff work performance" (Dixon, 1988, p.3). He continues by indicating that the work environment within which employees operate has a tremendous role in the utilization of the training learning.

### **The Enemies of Performance Improvement (or the application of training learning)**

The enemies of performance improvement and, hence, of good learning are many. Here are a few prominent ones:

- No immediate need to apply the knowledge or skill
- No support system for reinforcing the learning on the job
- A company culture or work situation antithetical to the new learning
- No rewards for successfully applying the new knowledge or skill
- No consequences for not applying the new knowledge or skill
- No time to integrate and apply the new knowledge or skill.

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9. This situation cannot continue. In today's right-sized, de-layered, and re-engineered organizations, people are being asked to do more and more. The performance demands placed on employees are growing; the work they are asked to do is changing.
10. Key Differences between the Roles of Traditional Trainer and Performance Consultant

The traditional trainers' role is not "wrong" or "bad"; rather, it is insufficient for the needs of our organizations in today's highly competitive, reengineered, customer-focused world. The Performance Consultant requires the skills of a trainer to access people who have those skills. But the role requires more. Someone in the role of Performance manager thinks in terms of what people must do if business goals are to be achieved. This is different from the traditional training process of focusing on what people must learn.

**Traditionnel Trainer Role vs. Performance Consultant Role**

<b>Traditional Trainer Role</b>	<b>Performance Consultant Role</b>
Held accountable for training activity. Measures include number of participant days, instructor days, and courses. Frequently, the axiom under which this role operates is "More is better".	Identifies and addresses performance needs of people.  Provides services that assist in changing or improving performance. These can include training services but should also include formation of performance models (that is, performance needed to achieve business goals) and guidance in addressing work environment obstacles. Views training as a means to an end. People must transfer what they learn to the job. Only when performance has changed in the desired direction has the output from the Performance Consultant role been completed.  Held accountable for establishing and maintaining partnerships with managers and others in the organization. The contribution to improving the performance of people in the organization is measured.

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<p>Training evaluations are completed for participant reaction and learning.</p> <p>Assessments typically identify only the training needs of employees.</p> <p>Training function is viewed as a cost (not an investment). Training programs and services have a limited, acknowledged linkage to business performance/ goals.</p>	<p>The results of training and non-training actions are measured for performance change and cost benefit.</p> <p>Assessments are completed to determine performance gaps and the reasons for these gaps; in this manner the work environment's readiness to support required performance is identified.</p> <p>The function is viewed as producing measurable results, such as cost savings. Completed work has a high linkage to the organization's performance/ goal.</p>
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11. The challenge we face is to take full advantage of change, to expedite the movement from 'old work' to higher skill 'new work'. New work means fewer repetitive tasks and more problem solving. New work .... cannot be instantly duplicated by other countries because it depends on the one resource within the nation that remains durable here with us – **our minds.**"
  
12. The big question, therefore, is can training actually help in facing today's challenges? Can training actually contribute in improving staff work performance and increasing organizational effectiveness? The answer is definitely a big 'YES'. However, we need to change our mindset and training approach. We need to look at training, not as something having mere ornamental value for our balance sheets, but as an important tool of meeting organizational effectiveness and facing increasing work challenges.