



Everything DiSC® Pulse: Training Effectiveness: The Manager's Role

Pop Quiz: You need to increase the effectiveness of your training and you have zero budget. Do you:

- A). Redo the entire format and presentation and add every (free) bell and whistle you can think of?
- B). Ransack other budgets until you can come up with enough dollars to give your training a complete overhaul?
- C). Get the participants' managers involved?

The answer is C: Get the manager involved. Well, depending on the state of your training, you might want to consider one or more of these ideas, but for today, let's focus on the manager.

We surveyed 2,100 recent training participants about their manager's involvement in past training experiences. Participants with highly involved managers were more likely to view the training as successful. In fact, almost 25 percent of a training program's perceived effectiveness is related to manager involvement.

Manager involvement is far from a given. In our survey, only two in five managers seem to take an active role in their direct reports' training, as rated by their direct reports. In addition, according to survey participants, 33 percent of managers rarely or never initiate conversations about training needs. However, when we broaden the scope to professional development as a whole, manager involvement increases to 52 percent, or about one out of every two managers. In addition, roughly the same percentage of direct reports felt that their managers held them accountable for their training goals.

Keep the Conversation Going

When we asked about follow-up to specific training experiences, the number fell a bit. Survey participants reported roughly one in three managers "usually or always" do post-training debriefs with their direct reports or discuss and references previous training experiences. The same number of managers "rarely or never" do these things. If you're looking to maximize the manager's impact, this might be it. Compared with all of the other variables we looked at, a manager's follow-up discussions had the biggest impact on the perceived effectiveness of the training experience.

How big of an impact are we talking about? Among participants who discussed their training experiences with their manager most often, 91 percent said the training was effective. For those who discussed it least often, only 58 percent reported the training to be effective. Similarly, among participants who discussed the training with their manager, 90 percent reported they were still using the skills they learned three months after the training. That number fell to 46 percent among participants who did not discuss the training.

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Ways to Get or Stay Involved

So, if you've been tasked with increasing the effectiveness of your training sessions, create a plan to get your managers involved. It's free, relatively easy (as compared to starting over or pillaging other budgets) and highly beneficial. While simply having a meaningful conversation about the training makes the biggest impact, there are other things managers can do to make a difference.

- Suggest books and articles for direct reports: This was one of the least frequent manager behaviors in our survey: 45 percent rarely or never did this. Oddly, this is probably the easiest, least time-consuming thing to do. (And in this same vein, you should definitely send this article to someone you know.)
- Recommend training opportunities to explore: This one fared better with 41 percent of respondents saying their manager usually or always does this.
- Be aware of the real training needs: Whether the training is to improve computer, communication, or job-related tasks, it's important for managers to see where the opportunities and gaps lie. And many managers already do: 51 percent of respondents reported that their managers are usually or always aware of their training needs.
- Help to find funding for requested training: This one probably just got a lot tougher for most managers. We were pleasantly surprised at the number of managers who usually or always provided help in this area: 52 percent.

About the authors

Mark Scullard is the director of research at Inscape Publishing, a leading provider of training materials for the corporate market. He has over a decade of research and data analysis experience in the development of psychological evaluation tools and methods. Mark received his doctorate in psychology from the University of Minnesota, with a supporting program in statistics.

Jeffrey Sugerman is the president and CEO of Inscape Publishing. He has over 20 years of experience in senior management, marketing and business development in the technology, training and publishing industries. Jeff holds doctorate and master's degrees in psychology from Washington University in St. Louis, and a bachelor's degree in psychology from Northwestern University.