How to Assess the Effectiveness of Your Training Using the Kirkpatrick Model
eLeaP™ Learning Management System (LMS/LCMS) is a complete, secure, web-based training and e-learning solution that employs a simple and intuitive user interface. This way both technical and non-technical training managers can easily create, manage, and track interactive training courses and learning programs for all levels of users.

eLeaP™ is SCORM 1.2/ SCORM 2004 compliant.
Introduction

The value of training sessions, courses and other training materials is not relevant until a full evaluation of the training takes place. The challenge that the majority of companies face is that measuring the effectiveness of its training programs uses resources and time. With more and more organizations facing a shortage of resources and time, it becomes increasingly hard to devote either of these to evaluating training programs.

Training evaluations uncover valuable information the business needs to know to continue with the training program as it is. Additionally, evaluations of training programs can uncover what tweaks are required to make the training even more effective than it is.

Training is only effective when the organization benefits from the training its employees receive. Determining the effectiveness of the training program, however, requires a measuring system be in place. Future training sessions tend to receive funding when a training evaluation reveals that the organization benefits from training. Money also tends to flow for additional training resources.

An effective training program also provides organizations with a competitive edge over its competition. With the business world in a constant state of change, it’s imperative to create the most efficient and cost-effective training programs possible. The proper evaluation of training procedures already in place is the first step to creating even better training programs for tomorrow by adapting to changing circumstances.
Kirkpatrick Model

After realizing the importance of evaluating training programs, the next hurdle is figuring out how to measure training programs. Fortunately, there is a model and various resources available to conduct a proper training evaluation. The most popular training evaluation model is the Kirkpatrick Model.

The model originates from its creator Donald Kirkpatrick, who created the model in the 1950s. Over the years, the model has undergone some modifications and refinements. Its four primary levels of evaluation, however, have stood the test of time.

The four primary levels that make up the Kirkpatrick Model:

- Level 1 – Reaction
- Level 2 – Learning
- Level 3 – Behavior
- Level 4 -- Results

Throughout this guide, you can find a description of each level of the model.

Additionally, you can find ways to apply the model to your own training evaluation and tools you can use to implement the model into your business.
Level 1: Reaction

The first level of the Kirkpatrick Model for training evaluation is to find out what the attendees of the training thought of the training—their reaction to the training. This particular level measures the reaction of the attendees to the various aspects of the training. Obtaining this information is highly valuable to the company hosting the training. Not only can you measure how the audience received the training, but you can also seek ways to improve the training for future attendees. Finally, reaction feedback helps to pinpoint topics not covered in the training that should be in future sessions.

From the evaluation, you want to determine:

- If attendees thought the training was a valuable experience
- How attendees felt about the training
- Attendees’ opinions on the topic of the training
- How attendees rate the training material
- Feedback on the training presentation
- Ratings of the venue where the training took place

Applying Level 1 of the Model

In order to measure the reaction of training participants you have to come up with the questions you want them to answer for you.

Some of the questions you can consider include:

- Did the training participants feel the training was a valuable use of their time?
- Do participants rate the training as successful?
- What were the biggest advantages of the training?
- What are areas for improvement of the training?
- What did they like/dislike about the venue where the training took place?
- How did they feel about the presentation style of the information and instructor?
- Did the training accommodate their personal learning style?
After you decide which questions you want to ask training attendees, you then have to decide how you want to collect and measure their responses. One of the most popular ways to gather these answers is with attendee questionnaires or surveys. Obtaining verbal feedback from participants is another option.

In conjunction with written or verbal responses, you can also observe body language and behavior during the training sessions. Once you've gathered this information, review it carefully. Then, think about what changes you can make to the training, based on your trainees' feedback and suggestions.

**Level 1 Tools**

eLeaP Software offers a comprehensive Learning Management System (LMS) to help you manage each aspect of evaluating the training.

- **Feedback Tool**: Allows the host of the training to provide a complete feedback questionnaire or survey for attendees to complete. The system sends out the questionnaire, manages the receipt of the completed questionnaires and presents the feedback forms for trainers and host companies to review and evaluate. Alternatively, the Observation Checklist Assessment can help with this.

- **White Board**: Permits participants to leave informal comments for the company in regards to the training. Allowing free-response formatting gives attendees the chance to address concerns and issues, not in the questionnaire.

- **Forum Tool**: Creates focus group sessions with training participants to gather additional feedback, evaluation, and suggestions on the training. Participants can leave responses and pose questions to other attendees, as well as communicate with the trainers and company hosting the training.
The second level of the Kirkpatrick Model for training evaluation is to determine to what extent participants gained knowledge, improved their skills and changed their attitudes from the training.

Prior to the training starting, you set goals and objectives for what the attendees can expect to learn while attending the training. Now is the time to bring these objectives back up and measure how effective the training was in helping attendees to reach each of the goals and objectives set.

You can measure how much and how well attendees learned the information in various ways. Measuring the learning rate of attendees allows you to tweak future training sessions to increase learning and retention opportunities for future attendees.

One measuring tool you can use is **quizzes and tests**. Have attendees take quizzes and tests at varying points throughout the training session or one comprehensive test at the end of the training session. The grade each attendee earns helps to evaluate how much of the information each attendee retained from the session.

Another way to measure learning is **on-the-job or hands-on training**. This is another form of testing that allows attendees to apply the information they learned during a real-life scenario that pertains to the employee’s job. The trainer or supervisor can review the employee’s completed work or evaluate the employee while they are completing the task to grade how well the employee does. The Training Within Industry Institute (TWI Institute) has some tools for developing, delivering and evaluating training in the manufacturing industry. eLeaP recently participated in a TWI summit to learn how we can support industry in achieving their training goals. Contact us 877-624-7226 if you need assistance.

A final determination to how well training attendees did is to have them evaluate the supervisor or trainer running the session. This approach allows attendees to self-evaluate how much information they learned during the training session by grading the teacher.
Applying Level 2 of the Model

In order to measure how much attendees learned from the training, you can start by establishing a base of their knowledge. The best practice is to administer a test before the training takes place. This allows you to assess and evaluate how much knowledge participants have when they go into the training session. You can also use the test to determine the skill levels and attitudes of the training participants.

When the training ends, you can test participants again. You can then compare the results of the tests from before and after the training. This reveals the change in knowledge, skills and attitude from before and after the training.

Level 2 Tools

The eLeaP Software offers a comprehensive LMS to help you manage Level 2 of the Kirkpatrick Model.

- **Quiz Tool**: Trainers can administer tests and quizzes to each attendee using the eLeaP Quiz Tool. The system presents each attendee with the same questions and even grades the responses of the quizzes and tests for the trainer to review. You can administer one quiz at the start of the class and you can administer a second quiz at the end of the class.

- **Feedback Tool**: Allows the host of the training to provide a complete feedback questionnaire for attendees to complete. The system sends out the questionnaire, manages the receipt of the completed questionnaires and presents the feedback forms for trainers and host companies to review and evaluate. In this case, the evaluation forms address how well the supervisor or trainer did in conducting the session to determine if the teacher fostered a learning environment for the students. The evaluation forms also allow students to evaluate the staff and the training course in general.
Level 3 Behavior

The third level of the Kirkpatrick Model for training evaluation is to determine to what extent participants change their behavior back in the workplace as a result of the training. In other words, this level of evaluation assesses how employees apply the skills and knowledge acquired in training when they get back to work.

It is important to keep in mind that Level 3 of the Kirkpatrick Model is not totally dependent on the first two levels of measurement. In other words, if employees do not apply what they learned in training to their daily job tasks, this does not necessarily mean that the training failed at Levels 1 and 2 of the model.

Other factors can affect whether or not the employees apply what they’ve learned. First, the employee’s manager or supervisor can prevent employees from changing the way they do their jobs. Second, employees might not have a desire to change their behavior. Both of these attitudes can prohibit the employee from application portion of the training process.

Applying Level 3 of the Model

Of all the levels, Level 3, which measures behavior, can be the most difficult to measure effectively. While the first two levels of the Kirkpatrick Model can provide immediate responses and results, measuring behavior requires more of a long-term approach. It can take weeks or even months to measure the behavior changes of employees that result from attending training sessions.

Some of the questions you can consider posing as part of evaluating Level 3 include:

• Have the participants applied any of what they learned to doing their jobs?
• Are the training participants sharing the knowledge, skills, or attitudes they picked up from training with their fellow employees that did not attend the training?
• Is there awareness among trainees that their behavior is different?
Two of the best ways to conduct the Level 3 assessment of the model is through observation of and interviews with the training attendees.

Changes in the behavior of training participants can be difficult to maintain as well. While a trainee can easily walk away from the training session with their newly acquired knowledge and skills, and a better attitude, this can just as quickly decline as time goes on.

For example, employees who do not receive recognition or awards for their progress can soon resort back to their original behaviors. A lack of co-worker and supervisor support of the participant’s changes can also cause attendees to stop implementing what they learned during the training.

**Level 3 Tools**

eLeaP offers a comprehensive LMS to help you manage Level 3 of the Kirkpatrick Model.

- **My Stuff**: My Stuff notes permits attendees to complete self-assessment questionnaires. The assessments can be completed online or as hardcopy assessments. Either way, employees can upload completed assessments to user accounts using My Stuff notes.

- **Observation Assessments**: A supervisor or the manager for each employee can conduct on-the-job observation. The manager or supervisor can use the onboard Observation Assessment system complete these assessments on or offsite.

- **Feedback**: Customers can be set up to provide online Feedback via eLeaP. The system provides reports from customers, peers, and the training participant’s manager. All of this information can help upper management evaluate how well the employee is applying what they learned from training.
Level 4 Results

The fourth level of the Kirkpatrick Model for training evaluation is to determine the overall outcome or results of the training. Prior to starting the training, business owners, managers or supervisors determine the results they are seeking from providing the training to employees.

Some of the goals a business owner, manager or supervisor can be looking to achieve with training are:

- Meeting goals that help advance the business
- Achieving goals that are good for the employees
- Satisfying goals that boost the bottom line of the business

Some of the measurable organizational benefits that are an outcome of training include increased productivity, promoting efficiency, growing sales revenue or reducing costs.

Applying Level 4 of the Model

Applying Level 4 of the Kirkpatrick Model is likely to be the most difficult and consume the most of your time. You first have to state the objectives you have for the training before you can start to measure the results. The results you measure directly relate to the objectives that you set.

Here are some outcomes you can consider measuring:

- Increased employee retention rates
- Increased customer satisfaction
- A decrease in customer complaints
- Waste reduction
- An increased in production
- Higher quality ratings
- A decline in staff complaints
- Increased sales
- Higher morale
Three primary sources exist to assist you in completing Level 4 of the Kirkpatrick Model when you are evaluating training.

- **Financial reports**: The business financial reports are one of the best sources for evaluating overall training results. You can compare the financial reports for the months leading up to the training to the financial reports that come after the training to measure the change. A marked change in productivity levels or sale revenues can indicate that the training had a positive effect on the business. A negative change or no change at all can indicate that training had a negative effect or no effect at all on the business.

- **Quality inspections**: Quality control inspections are another source of measuring training results. If a company is producing a product, physical inspections of the quality of the products is easy to assess. If it is a service-based business, measuring quality can be with customer satisfaction surveys and letters from satisfied or dissatisfied customers.

- **Interview(s) with sales manager(s)**: Interviews with the sales managers or the direct supervisors of the employees that attended the training can also reveal results. These managers and supervisors can attest to the change in productivity levels and work efficiency levels of the employees that participated in the training.
Considerations

Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model is one of the most popular and the most widely used evaluation models available. In spite of all of the benefits the model can bring to your business, it is also important to take several things into consideration.

Cost of Time and Money

Level 1 and Level 2 of the model are relatively easy and inexpensive to implement. Neither of these two levels takes up much time or eats up too much of the training budget. Level 3 and Level 4 are a different story.

While completing these levels is just as important to your business, applying these levels can take up more of your time and money than the first two levels of the model. Some organizations can find it cost prohibitive or time prohibitive to implement Levels 3 or 4 of the model.

For companies that have dedicated training professionals, a human resource department, or a comprehensive system that includes all or the majority of tools they need to complete the evaluation, using the Kirkpatrick Model is highly effective in evaluating training.

Level Independence

The way Kirkpatrick lays out the levels of the model suggests that he puts more importance on Level 4 than on the levels that came before it. The model also suggests that all of the levels of the model link to one another. For example, the implication is that Level 4 is the most important level of the model, while Level 1 is less important in the model.

In reality, however, this is not always the case.
Other Affects

Change in a business or organization is not solely dependent on training either. Factors, along with training, can affect the measurements of change. For example, the hiring of a new manager can boost employee morale and even boost productivity and efficiency, which all results in a boost to the bottom line of the business.

The Kirkpatrick Model is the tool to use for measuring training results in as scientific manner as possible. The model is the most limited at Level 4 because of all of the variables that can institute change in the organization.

Key Points and Conclusion

A full evaluation of the training that takes place with your employees reveals the value of training sessions, courses and other training materials. While many companies believe in the power that training provides, these same companies struggle with measuring just how effective these programs are. With time and resources being scarce in today's business environment, it's becoming increasingly difficult to spare time or money on evaluating training programs.

As important as training is to businesses and organizations, so is evaluating the training. Training evaluations reveal priceless information to the business so management knows what is working with the training. In addition, training evaluations uncover changes required to increase the effectiveness of the training program.

When businesses and organizations have an effective training program, it creates a competitive edge over the competition. With time and money in scarcity, it is crucial to create the most effective and cost-effective training programs possible. The first step to creating better training programs is the proper evaluation of training procedures that are in place today.
Now that you realize how important it is to evaluate training programs, you then have to choose the system to measure the training results. This is where the Kirkpatrick Model of Training Evaluation comes into play. The model originates from its creator Donald Kirkpatrick, who created the model in 1959. Over the years, the model has changed and morphed, but it is also the most popular and widely used training evaluation model available.

Throughout this guide, you found a description of each level of the model. Additionally, you found ways to implement the evaluation model to your training program. Finally, you found tools you can use to implement the model into your own business. Now that you have all of the resources at your disposal, it is time to apply the model to evaluate the effectiveness of your own business training sessions.

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