

# Deducing Strategy from action and endeavours

A learning and development strategy outlines how an organisation develops its workforce's capabilities, skills and competencies to remain successful. It's an important part of an organization's overall business strategy.

Organizational training has seen a significant shift in the past few years. From mere classroom training to new channels like online and mobile, from static training content to more responsive and interactive content like gaming, the changes have been in tune with changing times. Today, training is not a siloed function, but closely linked to HR processes like performance management and also to business outcomes like revenue generation. An effective training strategy is one that delivers on both the fronts—employee learning outcomes and organizational goals. Here is what HR professionals must keep in mind while creating a training strategy.

1. **Employees have time constraints:** L&D professionals must understand that training is an activity over and above the regular job, and employees are already stretched to achieve more with less. Hence, aim to add real value to the learner by designing effective training content that meets the specific learning needs. Learning modules, both classroom and online or mobile should be precise and yet reinforce the skills and attitudes they aim to inculcate in the learner. Managers too must respect the time of employees and allocate them training needs that they truly need to propel their careers in the right direction. Hence, training needs identification must be done carefully, considering the time and effort ROI of the employee. Only then will employees be receptive to receiving training and upgrading their skills.
2. **Group size and type matters:** This applies especially to classroom programs, where one-on-one interactions and personalized attention can make all the difference between a day wasted and real learning. A smaller group compels participants to actively involve, and gets everyone's voices heard. It is also important to choose the group according to job role. Some trainings like conflict management or leadership skills may benefit by having a diverse group from various functions it helps provide diverse views and a pan-organizational perspective on the topic. Others like specialized subject modules will require a focused group from a function, or even a sub-function. Be sure to design the group size and type to align with the training objectives.
3. **Specialize to add value:** Maximise the time spent by employees by making training content relevant to their desired outcome. Specialized content that is curated to the group at hand, especially for people from a niche function, will fuel better learning retention as well as engagement. Work outcomes are becoming more niche, especially in technology domains where a number of emerging technologies are making it big. Decide which skills you must build from within the organization and focus on those specific skills. Specialization is important to work towards goal achievement.

4. **Engage the learner:** A learner who is engaged in the learning process is more likely to gain significant takeaways from the process. Engaging the learner means understanding individual learning styles and preferences, and determining the right content and delivery channels to generate a “learning pull”. For example, the younger generation may be more interested in mobile learning than in a traditional classroom approach. A mobile workforce may prefer mobile learning to be able to access learning anytime-anywhere. New joiner induction can be done through online courses to make it location agnostic so that every new joiner gets involved with the organization irrespective of joining location. Putting a thought to what engages the learner goes a long way in making learning stick. Some of the latest in learning engagement are gaming, simulations, e-courses, video courses, and group exercises.
5. **Assess training outcomes:** It is not only important to deliver training, but to know whether it meets its objectives. Measuring training effectiveness from time to time is critical to help stay on the organizational track. A popular traditional model to evaluate training effectiveness is the Kirk Patrick model, with its four grades of training measurement reaction, learning, behavior and results. Very few organizations are able to link training outcomes with business outcomes in terms of tangible results i.e., how training correlates with revenue, profits, and other financial and business metrics. This is important to ensure a leadership buy-in for training initiatives.

A training strategy is a must to ensure effective implementation at each stage, right from needs identification to training delivery to training assessment. A dedicated Learning and Development team with expertise and experience in the latest organizational training norms and a knack to customize these to the internal needs, is a must.

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