Integrating Training and Performance Appraisal

Training and performance appraisal can work hand in hand if the appraisal looks ahead at what can be done to improve employee performance. BY DR. DONALD L. KIRKPATRICK

Training and performance appraisal have the same objective: to improve performance, which means both behavior and results. To what degree does your organization relate the two?

If you have a formal performance appraisal program, you probably think of it as a Human Resources program, with the main objective to determine merit increases and make decisions regarding promotions and other staffing issues. This is the emphasis put on most performance appraisal programs.

In the book, “Improving Employee Performance Through Appraisal and Coaching, 2nd edition,” I describe how an effective performance appraisal program can have an objective of not just making salary and promotion decisions based on past performance, but of developing a performance improvement plan and implementing it with supervisory coaching. This puts it in the same category as training, which is looking ahead and developing practical programs that result in improved performance. Both programs rely on managers to work with direct reports to maximize performance.

Training in many large organizations has departed from the Human Resources department and become a unique entity separate from performance appraisal. In some organizations, appraisals are done semi-annually or quarterly, and performance is discussed, but the overriding factor is still merit increases instead of improved performance.

There is general agreement that the same approach should not be used for appraisals aimed at salary decisions and improving performance, but in both approaches, an appraisal of performance is necessary. The main difference is that performance appraisal looks back, and training looks ahead. Another difference is the use of self-appraisal, in which the direct report completes a self-appraisal using the same form as the manager, and forms are completed in pencil and subject to change.

In performance improvement conversations, the direct report needs to agree that the appraisal is fair, or there is no sense in going further. Input from the
direct report is also usually necessary. Once employee strengths and weaknesses are confirmed, one weakness should be converted into a mutually agreeable training need. The manager and direct report then jointly develop a performance improvement plan, and define each of their roles in accomplishing it. The manager subsequently develops a coaching plan to ensure that what was agreed upon gets done. Improved employee performance results, because the manager and direct report have worked together to accomplish what both of them want—improved performance.

**BE A CHANGE AGENT**

Yes, training and performance appraisal are close relatives if the performance appraisal looks ahead at what can be done to improve employee performance. If you are responsible for performance appraisal, see how you can be a change agent involving training. Look at your objectives, forms, and procedures and talk with the training team to see how your appraisals can be turned into training needs.

If you are a training professional, either under Human Resources or part of a corporate university, get together with the performance appraisal professionals to see how you can work together to improve employee performance and productivity.

Put coaching skills on the top priority list for management development training and tie it in with your performance appraisal program.

One final thought for trainers: Put coaching skills on the top priority list for management development training and tie it in with your performance appraisal program. While you are at it, include a module on how to conduct an appraisal interview. This will help to solidify the close relationship between training and performance appraisal.

---

**Training magazine’s 2012 Learning 3.0 Conference**

**Taking eLearning to the Next Level**

We are entering the era of the autonomous learner, where the vision of real-time learning—having the right person access the right content at the right time in the right modality to do their work more effectively—is becoming a reality. *Training* magazine’s Learning 3.0 Conference will reveal key trends and technologies that are taking learning to the next level. This event will address how cutting-edge innovators are solving business problems for their organizations by leveraging learning assets, knowledge and information across the cloud to make their learning blend more cohesive, immediate, intuitive, inclusive, and immersive. **Save $200 when you register with Discount Code: TMAD2. Expires September 17.**

www.Learning3point0.com

This conference was an excellent investment in both our internal (employee-facing) and external (customer-facing) training programs.”

Heather Ettlinger, Manager, User Education, PDI

“The content matched exactly what was described in the agenda and the presenters were engaging.”

Brian Mc Walters, eLearning Development, CarMax

“Learning 3.0 has motivated me to try new ways of engaging learners in our organization.”

Christy Valledor, Performance & Learning Specialist II, HawaiiUSA FCU