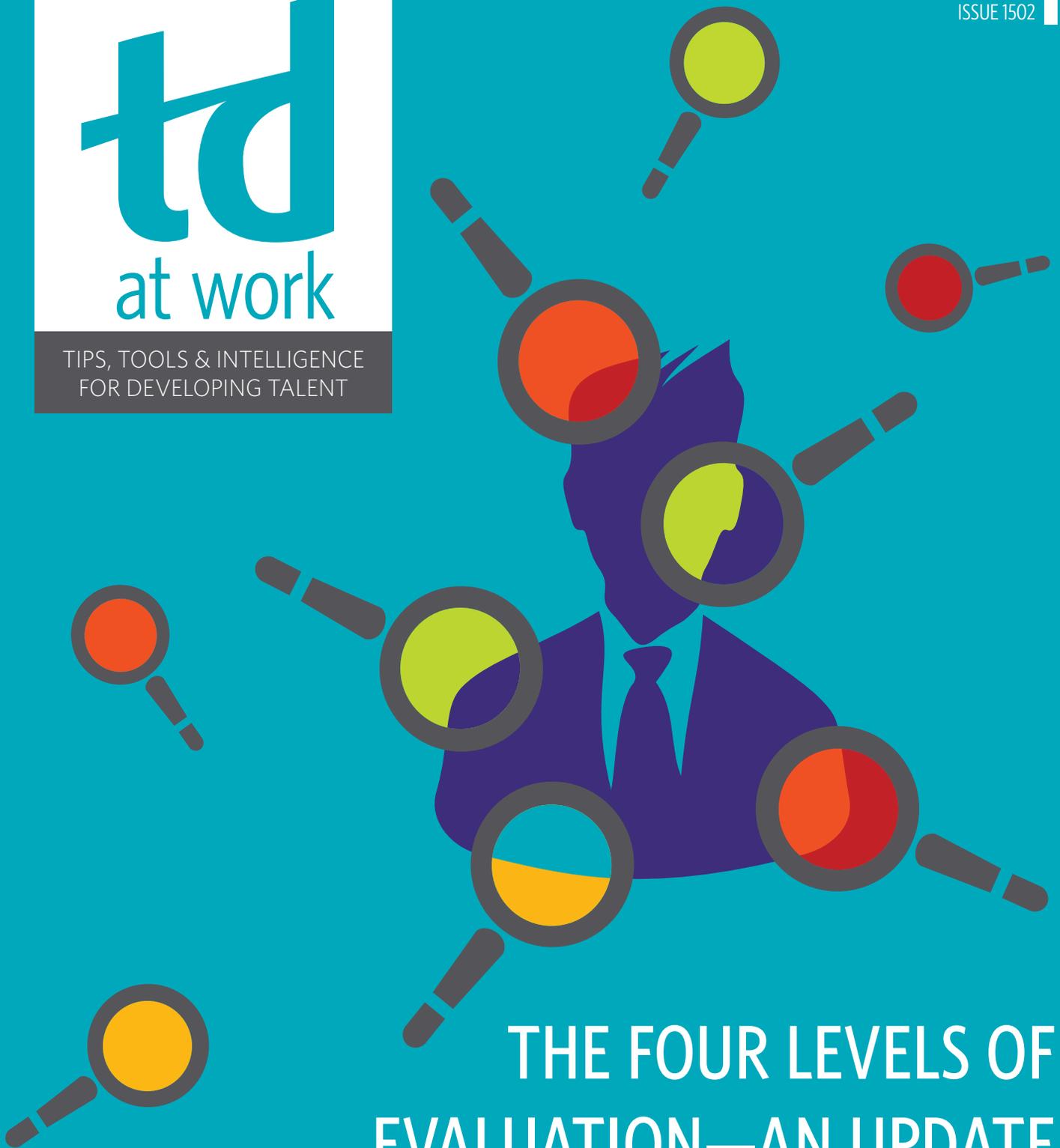


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TIPS, TOOLS & INTELLIGENCE
FOR DEVELOPING TALENT



THE FOUR LEVELS OF EVALUATION—AN UPDATE

Jim and Wendy Kirkpatrick

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LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

THE FOUR LEVELS OF EVALUATION—AN UPDATE



AUTHORS

Jim and Wendy Kirkpatrick

Jim and Wendy Kirkpatrick own and operate Kirkpatrick Partners. They are proud to carry on the work of the late Dr. Don Kirkpatrick, who created the Kirkpatrick Model more than 55 years ago. Together they created the New World Kirkpatrick Model to illustrate how the four levels are as relevant and practical as ever.

Jim and Wendy have written three books, including *Training on Trial*, and served as the subject matter experts for the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's *Training Evaluation Field Guide*.

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Around the world, training and development is in a state of crisis. Training budgets are among the first to be cut when economic times get tough. Whether you're one of the in-house survivors or a struggling consultant, you can no longer coast on lofty notions about continuous learning and employee development. You need to provide compelling evidence that training delivers bottom-line results and contributes to mission accomplishment.

Training must reinvent itself and transcend the classroom to earn its budget and maintain its existence. Savvy business professionals and enlightened organizations know that training has no value unless what is learned gets applied on the job, and the subsequent on-the-job performance contributes to key organizational outcomes.

This issue of *TD at Work* will show you how to create an effective training evaluation plan for any program so that you can show the organizational value of your work. At the same time, an effective plan will ensure that your valuable, limited resources are dedicated to the programs that will create the most impact.

Employing these principles in your work will earn you a seat at the proverbial table with business executives and secure your future as a valuable resource and key partner in accomplishing organizational results.

Specifically, this issue of *TD at Work* will answer these questions:

- Why evaluate?
- What is new about the Four Levels of Evaluation?
- How can I prove my value as a trainer?
- How can I share my story of value?

WHY EVALUATE?

There are three major reasons to evaluate training programs:

- to improve the program
- to maximize transfer of learning to behavior and subsequent organizational results

- to demonstrate the value of training to the organization.

Most training professionals are accustomed to evaluating training programs for the purpose of improving the program. Using formative (during the program) and summative (after the program) methods, which are used in formative and summative evaluation, they ask questions related to how participants enjoyed the program, whether they learned key information, and how the program might be improved for future sessions. This type of information is useful to learning and performance professionals to gauge the quality of their training programs, materials, and presenters. If evaluation of the training program shows that the program was well received and key information was learned, then the program can be called effective training.

More savvy training professionals realize that even the most well-designed and well-received training programs are of little use unless what is learned in training gets implemented on the job. This is often called the transfer of learning to behavior. If what was learned translates into improved job performance, then it is possible for better organizational results to be achieved. If training evaluation shows that on-the-job performance increased and results improved, then training effectiveness has occurred.

Finally, learning and performance professionals must be able to show the organizational value of their training. Like any other department in an organization, training is not exempt from showing how the resources allocated to them have been put to use. By gathering data related to effective training and training effectiveness, learning and performance professionals can credibly show the value that training has brought to the organization.

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THE FOUR LEVELS— UPDATED FOR THE NEW WORLD

Simple, isn't it? All you need to do is show that your training is effective and that it has created training effectiveness. How can this be done, especially with limited time, money, and resources? A simple and time-tested model for accomplishing this is the Kirkpatrick Model, or the four levels.

Level 4: Results

Level 4 holds the distinction of being the most misunderstood of the four levels. It is the degree to which targeted outcomes occur as a result of the learning event(s) and subsequent reinforcement.

A common misapplication occurs when professionals or functional departments define results in terms of their small, individual area of the organization instead of for the entire company. This creates silos and fiefdoms that are counterproductive to organizational effectiveness. The resulting misalignment causes layers upon layers of dysfunction and waste.

Clarity regarding the true Level 4 result of an organization is critical. By definition, it is some combination of the organizational purpose

and mission. In a for-profit company, it means profitably delivering the product or service to the marketplace. In a not-for-profit, government, or military organization, it means accomplishing the mission.

Every organization has just one Level 4 result. A good test of whether or not the correct Level 4 result has been identified is a positive answer to the question, "Is this what the organization exists to do, deliver, or contribute?"

While this definition of results is straightforward, frustration with the seeming inability to relate a single training class to a high-level organizational mission is common.

Business results are broad and long term. They are created through the culmination of countless efforts of people, departments, and environmental factors. They can take months or years to manifest.

Leading Indicators

Leading indicators help to bridge the gap between individual initiatives and efforts and organizational results. They are defined as short-term observations and measurements that suggest that critical behaviors are on track to create a positive impact on the desired results. Organizations will have a number of leading indicators that encompass departmental and individual goals, each contributing to the accomplishment of the highest-level results.

Common leading indicators include:

- customer satisfaction
- employee engagement
- sales volume
- cost containment
- quality
- market share.

While leading indicators are important measurements, they must be balanced with a focus on the highest-level result. For example, a company with excellent customer satisfaction scores could go out of business if it does not maintain profitability, comply with laws and regulations, and keep its employees reasonably happy.

WHERE THE FOUR LEVELS CAME FROM

The Kirkpatrick Model was developed by Dr. Donald Kirkpatrick (1924-2014) in the mid-1950s as he was writing his doctoral dissertation. His goal was to effectively measure the impact of the management development programs he was teaching at the University of Wisconsin Management Institute.

Dr. Kirkpatrick Sr.'s work became known and later published by a trade journal in the late 1950s. During the following 50 years, worldwide use grew organically. Today, the Kirkpatrick Model, illustrated in the four levels sidebar, is the most highly recognized, used, and regarded method of evaluating the effectiveness of training programs.

Note that customer satisfaction is an example of a goal that does not provide an affirmative answer to the question, “Is this what the organization exists to contribute?” No organization exists to deliver customer service alone.

Level 3: Behavior

Level 3 is the degree to which participants apply what they learned during training when they are back on the job. The New World Level 3 behavior consists of critical behaviors, required drivers, and on-the-job learning.

Critical Behaviors

Critical behaviors are the few specific actions that, if performed consistently on the job, will have the biggest impact on the desired results.

There are perhaps thousands of behaviors a given employee might perform on the job; critical behaviors are those that have been identified as the most important to achieving organizational success. Examples of critical behaviors include conducting weekly team meetings that include all direct reports to document project status and required actions, or completing all specified safety tests to standard.

Required Drivers

The New World Kirkpatrick Model adds required drivers to Level 3. Required drivers are processes and systems that reinforce, monitor, encourage, and reward performance of critical behaviors on the job. Common examples of required drivers include job aids, coaching, work review, pay-for-performance systems, and recognition for a job well done.

Required drivers are the key to accomplishing the desired on-the-job application of what is learned during training. They decrease the likelihood of people falling through the cracks, or deliberately crawling through the cracks if they are not interested in performing the required behaviors.

Organizations that reinforce the knowledge and skills learned during training with accountability and support systems can expect as much as 85 percent application on the job.

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Conversely, companies that rely primarily on training events alone to create good job performance achieve around a 15 percent success rate, according to Robert Brinkerhoff in *Telling Training’s Story*.

Active execution and monitoring of required drivers is perhaps the biggest indicator of program success for any initiative.

EXAMPLES OF REQUIRED DRIVERS

SUPPORT	
Reinforce Follow-up modules Work review checklist On-the-job training Self-directed learning Refreshers Job aids Reminders Executive modeling	Encourage Coaching Mentoring Reward Recognition Pay for performance
ACCOUNTABILITY	
Monitor Action learning Interviews Observation Self-monitoring Key performance indicators	Action plan monitoring Dashboard Work review Survey Touchbases/meetings

Source: Kirkpatrick Partners. Used with permission.

On-the-Job Learning

On-the-job learning is part of the New World Level 3 in recognition of two facts of the modern workplace:

- Up to 70 percent of all learning takes place on the job.
- Personal responsibility and motivation are key partners in external support and reinforcement efforts for optimal performance.