Delivering Training That Delivers the Goods

By understanding the personal preferences of your trainees , you'll be on the way to delivering training that delivers the goods. Use the patterns of type distribution in certain roles to inform your training design. And be careful of the language of goal setting and action planning to ensure the transfer of learning from the training programme into implementation and business results.

Identifying the missing link

It is no secret that many training events fail to deliver the goods. Effective training demands preparation, delivery and implementation. However, the purpose - and therefore the 'success' of the training - has to be linked to the delivery of business results.

A basic ingredient for successful training is to get the right people, to the right place, at the right time, with the right motivation.

Good trainers will use training needs analysis to identify the desired business objectives, the skills or knowledge gaps and the appropriate training channels.

However, there has often been a 'missing link' - the behavioural type preferences and motivators of each of the stakeholders.

Type preferences in the training room

The design and development of training should take into account the basics of learning styles. But it seldom incorporates even the basics of type preferences. Theories and applications of type preferences are not new and the original work of Jung and Myers-Briggs has been extended and expanded by a variety of alternative type indicators.

There are several advantages of bringing type preferences into the training room. For example, an awareness of type helps the trainer to manage the structure and pace of the session, the energy of the group and the presentation of the content. Experienced trainers may have 'intuitively' learnt when and how to match and change the dominant energy of the group in order to support all-round learning. Good training design uses a blend of learning activities to ensure that we achieve a balance. But include the insights that type can bring, and we can achieve maximum impact by taking into account the personal preference differences of the trainees and the trainer's type bias.

Trainers and trainees can quickly and easily identify their type using a 10-minute online Your Preferences assessment. The tool generates an instant report on their personal style and behavioural characteristics.

A troublesome trainee – or an expression of type differences?

Understanding type is also a way of overcoming 'trouble' in the classroom - the awkward question; the trainee who doesn't like role play; the silent one; or someone who keeps telling you that it's been tried before and didn't work.

The most-read article in 2007 on the TrainingZone.co.uk forum was one about conflict in the classroom. However much you've prepared for the session, the reality is that anything can happen. Yet 'trouble' is often the result of a mismatch between the trainee's expectations and preferences, and those of the trainer.

If we see these difficulties as different expressions of type preferences rather than 'trouble', then the trainer has an approach that they can apply in any situation - from course to course or group to group - enabling them to develop their own 'type watching' skills and create a successful learning environment.

Know your client group

Type preferences also have a role to play in setting the expectations of the training. For example, 10,000 customer services staff recently needed training for a new credit card initiative, to ensure

that they could handle customer queries. The organisation's marketing team saw this as an opportunity to demonstrate outstanding customer service. In type preferences terminology, the marketing team had created what they saw as an idealised vision of a compelling future for everyone. They stipulated that the training should start with the 'big picture' - why the new credit card was being introduced, the company's five-year vision and the importance of providing excellent customer service.

The reasons were compelling. But research into type distribution shows that there are disproportionately more people with a 'big picture' preference in head office than 'at the coal face'. Likewise, there are more people with a 'big picture with people-focus' in marketing than in customer service teams. Marketing in a large organisation is about ideals and visions. The marketing team were trying to create the briefing that they would have wanted to hear.

However, out of a 'training population' of 10,000, one could expect around 7,500 (75%) to have a 'here and now, facts and specifics' type preference. The main question that these individuals will tune into is 'What do I have to say to Mrs Jones to help solve her problem?'

They don't care about the company's five-year vision. They just want to know:

- Who will be affected and how?
- What will I have to do differently (now and tomorrow)?
- What will I tell my customers?
- How will the new system actually work?
- When is it starting?

The training team addressed this matter by sharing the concept of type theory and its statistics with the marketing stakeholders, and reduced a likely 40-minute session - that would have been a turn-off for 75 per cent of its attendees - to a 10-minute Q&A session, with online information available to those who wanted to know more.

Type preferences and action planning for results

If we've done the preparation perfectly - and the trainer has flexed their own type preferences to meet the needs of all participants - the 'happy sheets' should indicate a successful event.

Research has shown that around 85 per cent of a training investment is concentrated on the event itself. However, it is one thing to get the desired actions put into a plan - but quite another to put the plan into action.

Implementation support isn't expensive - and it isn't rocket-science - but it is critical. Now is the time to take advantage of the available technologically-delivered tools that can take the action plan out of the dusty course folder and turn it into business results.

Action plans without an implementation framework and accountability measures will remain just plans. Type preferences are important here. An action plan that includes support - by a manager or coach - is essential for people-focused people (a Feeling preference, in type terms). It helps them to feel appreciated, and therefore motivated to take action to get more appreciation. In contract, those with objective, analytical or solution-focused type preferences use their action plans and measures to 'test' themselves - either as a prompt to record their achievements or to create a logical framework and structure to their plans and actions.

If we in the training world continue to fail to ignore the importance of providing post-training-event implementation support then our training events will continue to fail to deliver the results that are vital to business success.

As can be seen from the above, type preferences can be the 'missing link' that can effectively enhance your chances of successfully delivering training that does indeed deliver the goods.

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