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Courageous TRAINING



Bold Actions for Business Results

an excerpt from

***Courageous Training:
Bold Actions for Business Results***

by Tim Mooney and Robert O. Brinkerhoff
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Preface

If you were a brand-new baby sea turtle, your odds for survival would be grim: of thousands hatched, only a dozen or so make it to adulthood. From jellyfish to dandelions, this is the way nature works. Thousands of seeds are dispersed in the seas or winds, but only a few are viable survivors.

What seems to work OK in the world of nature is not effective in the world of business. Investments in workplace learning are meant to give birth to new capabilities that employees can use to improve job performance. Odds are better here than for sea turtles, but not by a huge amount. If you wanted a sure bet, your best guess would be 15% to 20% of trainees who participate in the typical workplace learning event ever employ their new capabilities in a way that leads to worthwhile results for the organization.

This book is about how people who beat those odds do so, and it is for people who want to do the same. In the past several years, we have had the privilege to work with training leaders who, despite myriad obstacles, consistently accomplish truly remarkable results. They have not done this by relying on luck or chance. They have changed the way they think about and approach their work, and they have changed the way training works in their organizations. In this way, they have helped their organizations be more successful and accomplish valuable business goals with far more certainty and speed. They have also changed the way they are perceived and valued, moving from being simply training administrators or deliverers to being impactful leaders who have earned respect and recognition.

Their results are dramatic, doubling and often tripling (and more) the return on investment from training initiatives. For the past four years, we worked side by side with these training leaders, talked with them, analyzed their approaches, and otherwise sought to understand what differentiates them from typical trainers. “Courageous Training” is a term we have coined and a model we have articulated to describe how these training leaders have accomplished their results. Why we chose the adjective “courageous” is explained below.

There are two principal components of the Courageous Training model: the Four Courageous Training Pillars (Four Pillars) and the Courageous Training Code. The Four Pillars is a systematic set of concepts, methods, and tools for thinking about, planning, implementing, and evaluating training that, when applied consistently, leads to workplace learning that has an extraordinary impact on business. The methods and tools of the Four Pillars are not based on guesswork or theory alone. They are practical and they have worked in myriad organizational settings, including health care, manufacturing, high technology, finance, sales, and professional services; they have worked in large and small organizations, public and private. They are derived from decades of research and best practices and from the authors’ work with hundreds of companies around the globe developing their High Impact Learning (HIL) approaches. The authors have refined these earlier approaches into a more replicable and scalable process that more than forty leading-edge companies have adopted. In the past four years, these companies organized into a formal user group that collaborates to further refine workplace learning. The case examples in this book were drawn from recent work by some members of this user group.

This book not only examines the tools and methods that these exceptional leaders use, it also explores the second principal component of the Courageous Training model: the Courageous

Training Code. Many books provide advice on how to be a better business partner, how to turn training into performance, and how to measure training results and return on investment (ROI). But our guess is that among the thousands of training leaders who have read those books and attended the related workshops, only a handful (back to sea turtles again) have really been able to make those approaches work and to get the great results promised—either due to the shortcomings of the methods or due to a lack of concentrated effort to fully commit to a new approach in the face of resistance and challenges.

So what's new here? We have refined the Four Pillars and combined them with the Courageous Training Code. We had this revelation when we heard trailblazing trainers tell their stories. Like tightrope walkers, these trainers mustered their resolve and stepped out into a risky space. But it was more than simply taking a daring risk. As we talked with them, worked alongside them, and dug into their experiences, we discovered the principles and code of conduct that these leaders relied on to guide their interactions with senior executives, managers, and other stakeholders. These principles, which we condensed in the Courageous Training Code, enabled them to stay the course and steadfastly employ the Four Pillars. They had the audacity to set and promise lofty goals for their customers. Instead of about 20% of trainees applying new learning in ways that could impact business, they aimed to turn the ratio around, shooting for 80% or more.

The four members of the user group chose to write case examples from four different industries: manufacturing, health care, technology, and public education. Like the tightrope walker on our cover, these training leaders had the courage to step out into a new challenge without a safety net. Like a successful high-wire performer, they relied on proven techniques and practices, and they took their first steps on a small scale that

they could master. They did not start out trying to cross the Grand Canyon. But they also faced risk and all acknowledge the fears they had to overcome to try the metaphorical tightrope walk in the first place.

Besides their willingness to follow a bold course, there is nothing unique about the courageous trainers that differentiates them from anyone reading this book for guidance. They are training directors, managers in training departments, chief learning officers, or human resources development consultants tasked with a principal responsibility for helping organizations plan and conduct employee learning and development. The advice and counsel, tools and methods of Courageous Training can be used by anyone who sees a need and has the resolve to make a difference. Those who take this journey will be able to improve training outcomes and raise their personal stock in their organizations.

1

Introduction: The Hole We're In and How We Can Stop Digging

The first rule for being in a hole that you can't climb out of: Stop digging!

DENIS HEALEY, former British Chancellor of the Exchequer

What if training really had to work? What if your organization was “betting the business” on a new strategic venture, the success of which depended largely on training? Could you guarantee that the training would absolutely, positively work to drive performance and to create business impact?

The odds would be against you. The reality is that training fails to work far more often than it works. If you put a hundred

employees through the typical corporate training program, chances are that less than 20% will end up using what they learned in ways that will lead to improved job performance. The vast majority of trainees will fail to improve their performance, even if they tried to utilize the training. They will encounter a combination of obstacles, including indifferent bosses, crushing time pressures, lack of incentives to change, peer pressure, or some other problem that will extinguish their motivation.

Why is this so?

We know what some of the causes of poor training outcomes are *not*. We know that training leaders, managers, and employees are *not* trying to make training fail. (Throughout this book the term “training leader” denotes the role that provides leadership to the learning and development function in an organization, such as training manager, chief learning officer, consultants, and other human resources development professionals whose job it is to provide direction to the workplace learning operation. The term “training” includes all workplace learning, whether in the classroom or on-line, such as employee development, leadership and executive education, technical skills training, soft skills training, job rotations, and so forth.) Training leaders do not get up each morning with a pledge to try to make things worse and to see what new disasters they can bring about. Most training leaders, moreover, are not content to see training yield sub-optimal results. In fact, they work hard at trying to make sure that the training is the best it can possibly be and that trainees get as much as possible from the workshops and other learning services.

Further, we know that training leaders are not ignorant. Increasingly, they have advanced degrees in human resources development or a related field. Most of them are well educated, attend professional conferences, and read multiple books and

articles each year about improving learning and performance. But several insidious forces prevent training operations from producing more than only the most marginal of business results. These are very strong, deeply rooted forces that block improvement and derail efforts to make things better, seeming to paint training leaders into a corner where failure is inevitable. This chapter is about those forces and sets the stage for the Courageous Training approach: a proven model and set of principles for action that bold leaders have used to overcome the negative forces and thereby to achieve remarkable impact and value from training investments.

One of the first things these courageous leaders did was to recognize the negative forces for what they were. The leaders also decided that they were not satisfied with business as usual. Good enough, for them, was not good enough. They began to work with their clients in ways that would effect change, using innovative methods and tools that would help ensure increased impact and value. But we also know from our work with these highly effective training leaders that the tools and methods alone were not sufficient to achieve outstanding results. The leaders also had the courage—the leadership backbone—to stand up time and again to the forces that would try to paint them back into a corner from which their efforts would fail.

Courageous Training has two complementary and interdependent parts:

- The Four Pillars, which comprise the concepts, methods, and tools that successful training leaders have employed, and
- The Courageous Training Code, which incorporates the seven principles for conduct that guide the leaders in their personal behavior and interactions with other people.

Chapter Two describes the Four Pillars; the subsequent four chapters explain each pillar in depth, including examples and illustrations of the methods and tools characteristic of each pillar. But as emphasized throughout this book, without a courageous and bold training leader, the tools and methods of the Four Pillars, as helpful as they are, are not enough. Chapter Seven examines the other half of the formula for success: the Courageous Training Code. This code articulates the rules of conduct that put into operation the intangible but vital qualities of will, tenacity, and vision that Courageous Training leaders must embody to implement the Four Pillars. Chapter Eight introduces four bold training leaders who have achieved remarkable results—the results that first inspired us to write this book. Each of these leaders wrote a case study, and the case studies comprise the subsequent four chapters. In the final chapter (Chapter Thirteen), we outline a path that other training leaders may take to begin their own courageous journey: where to start, what steps to take, and what to watch out for along the way.

WHY ISN'T TRAINING WORKING NOW?

The courageous training leaders with whom we have had the privilege to work knew things could be better, and they were determined to make them better. They saw that training efforts often were stuck in a hole, a hole that was getting deeper and, worse yet, a hole that they themselves were sometimes a party to digging!

It is useful for us to review some of the negative forces that we, our Courageous Training colleagues, other authors, and probably many training practitioners have seen that make the training hole ever deeper. These are the forces that we must recognize

and understand if we are to put down our shovels and climb out of the hole into a space of Courageous Training.

The Mr. Goodwrench Syndrome

Mr. Goodwrench is the name used by an American automobile company to market its garage and repair services. It is a label that also reflects an attitude common among managers in many organizations—the notion that the training department is some sort of “employee repair” facility. According to this ingrained, habitual belief, if your employees are not performing well, then you can send them to get some training, where they will be “fixed.” When the training is over, they will return as fully functioning and effective performers.

Of course it does not work this way. Almost always, the causes of poor performance that drive a frustrated manager to request training for an employee are complex and rooted in myriad organizational, cultural, and systemic issues. Lack of training is seldom the exclusive or primary problem, and a training class alone will not make the poor performance go away. The training function, despite well-intended efforts to get at real causes, is often pressured to deliver some sort of training. Very often, training leaders cave in and, against their better instincts, go ahead and fill the order for training.

And so some training is delivered, and the net results are predictable: frustration all the way around. The employees who are having difficulties do not get the real causes of their problems addressed. They sit through training that they feel they do not need, and as a result leave even more frustrated in their jobs. The manager blames the training department for being nonresponsive and unrealistic, for wanting to take too much precious manager time for an elaborate needs-analysis process, or for delivering training that is not effective—since the employees still are not performing well. Members of the training

department, in turn, are frustrated that managers treat them as simply a training order-and-delivery fulfillment function, and that managers appear to be ignorant of what it takes to really improve performance. It does not take the proverbial rocket scientist to see when this syndrome is happening. But can a training leader reasonably be expected to possess the strength of will and negotiation skills needed to address the issue in the face of certain resistance?

The Training-Impact Death Spiral

Training will lead to business impact only if freshly trained employees actually try out new skills and knowledge in their everyday job performance. Almost always, they will encounter some challenges in doing this. It is common knowledge that supervisors have a lot of influence over whether employees have an opportunity to apply training in new job tasks. If supervisors act thoughtfully and effectively to help employees try out and nurture new skills, then training will stick and lead to improved performance and results. If supervisors do not—if they neglect this support role or actively challenge it with negative reinforcement—then employees will quickly return to the old way of doing things; training, therefore, will have no impact.

But most managers are not held accountable for supporting their employees' training. They are held accountable for producing sales results, meeting production goals, fulfilling customer requests, and so forth. At the end of the year, no manager was ever told, "Your unit didn't meet its production goals and your quality was terrible, but we are going to give you a hefty bonus because you were the poster child for training support." Managers will do what they need to do in order to accomplish the goals on which they are being measured. They will not do what is perceived as a "nice to do" or a distraction from producing

results—such as taking time to help freshly trained employees in their efforts to try out new skills.

Moreover, most managers have witnessed a lot of training, both for themselves and for their employees, that was a waste of time and neither relevant nor helpful. Generalizing from these experiences, they find it hard to see any future training in a new light. If they had to wager on whether some new training was going to be worthwhile, or not, chances are they would bet on “not worthwhile.”

Managers with this viewpoint are unlikely to take any concrete and focused actions to support the training, beyond letting employees participate. As a result, their prediction becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy: that is, the training will not be applied, and their lack of action to support it will be justified. Of course, they will not recognize that their own lack of support prevented the training from working. They will simply consider themselves prescient: “See? I didn’t think this training would be worth supporting, and I was right. I don’t see any results from it.”

And so the downward spiral picks up speed. As managers withhold support for training that they suspect is not worthwhile, their predictions come true. As they see more evidence that training is not working, they are more reluctant than ever to change course and provide active support. Because the majority of training yields less and less impact, training leaders find it harder and harder to get managers to change their cynical attitude toward training. Eventually, it often happens that both parties simply give up. The Death Spiral claims another dance partner.

The Myth of Training as a Silver Bullet

The training-as-the-silver-bullet myth is the logical extension of the Mr. Goodwrench Syndrome and the Death Spiral described above. This myth stems from the wishful thinking that

if organizations provide outstanding programs that are engaging and well-designed, then participants are very likely to take what they learned and apply it back on the job in ways that will improve their performance and organizational results.

Much has been written in the past ten years pointing out the shortcomings of this myth, encouraging training departments to position learning as a process and not as an event, and advocating substantial involvement of senior leaders and line managers if the organization is serious about sustaining a change in behavior. Despite these admonitions, however, we find that many training departments still invest a disproportionate amount of time, energy, and resources to ensure that training is a “glow in the dark” event. They fail to make even modest efforts to rigorously manage the environmental factors that are required to foster and support the use of the new skills back on the job.

Admittedly, altering the relevant environmental factors in an organization is difficult to achieve: it requires additional resources and, importantly, significant demands on managerial time and attention. Many training leaders are likely to give up putting the components in place that go beyond the training event at the first sign of the inevitable resistance from harried managers or training participants.

But the problem runs deeper than reluctance to overcome resistance. We believe that many training professionals fail to recognize and implement the key element in the concept of making learning truly a performance improvement *process*. Efforts are often made to add before- and after-training components, such as brown-bag lunches and refresher CDs, desktop job aids or laminated reminder cards, and so forth. These efforts are noble and are moving in the right direction, but they are not sufficient and contribute only the most marginal results. The real key to turning training into business impact is not in giving trainees

another dose of the learning content or reminders to use it, but in ensuring that the barriers to applying learning on the job are removed or reduced. Meeting this challenge requires substantive work with and contributions from the managers of trainees and very often from the senior managers. We find that few training professionals have the access, commitment, and tenacity to stick with this work. Isn't it easier and more within our control simply to polish up the training and make it even shinier, than to confront line managers about their role in supporting performance improvement?

Butcher, Baker, or Candlestick Maker: What Business Are We In?

Many forces converge to put greater pressures on training departments: increasingly complex work processes and technologies that require constant skill updates, more diverse workforces with varied educational and cultural needs, the need to lure top talent from a decreasing pool of prospects with promises of career development and other learning benefits, and expanding regulatory and ethical rules. This is only a partial list, but it demonstrates the broad scope of demands that training departments face.

In this pressure-filled context, the tactical challenge of merely filling service orders becomes an overwhelming issue for training departments. Even though training needs are diverse and some are far more strategically vital than others, all training gets lumped together as just "training." Some training is clearly vital for execution of strategy, improving operations, launching new products, or penetrating new markets. Other training (e.g., open enrollment courses and electives) may be less vital. Regardless of the strategic level of the training inquiry, it is difficult for members of the training department to turn away requests. In some organizations, they may fear political fallout

for doing so; in others they may be reluctant to lose control over training programs. They may fear that if some programs are taken away, then later they could lose them all. So despite learning department mission statements to the contrary, training is increasingly construed as a “delivery” function versus a strategic, business-enhancing process. The consequences of this misperception are troublesome.

The beleaguered training leader cannot be blamed for spending inordinately more and more time merely on managing delivery requests and issues. Take time to be a business partner? I’d love to, they might say, but I have too many other priorities right now managing and delivering training. The effort and courage it will take to go against the grain and say “no” to better focus on producing business outcomes seems too daunting.

Too Much Effort on Trying to Please “Customers”

Rest assured, we are not proposing that training should aim to annoy and displease customers. But we do see a lot of confusion about who is the customer of training, and subsequently about just whom to please. Many of the practices in a training department would lead you to believe that trainees are the principal customer group. Trainees are asked at the end of every learning engagement—a workshop, a web module, a seminar—to rate the extent to which they were pleased with the learning event, the extent to which it met their expectations, and so forth.

There is nothing wrong, of course, with efforts to make the learning experience enjoyable and to situate it in a pleasant venue. But there is something deeply wrong with being fuzzy about who the customer of the training operation really is. If the purpose of training is construed principally as a staff benefit—to provide learning and development mostly to attract and retain employees—then conceiving the training operation as if it

were a university campus or commercial conference center is just fine. But the original and overarching purpose for workplace learning is to help the business perform and succeed. Given this strategic purpose, the ultimate customer is executive leadership; the proximate customer is line management—the bosses of trainees. It is their needs first and foremost that should be served. But far less attention is usually devoted to these folks.

A further but more subtle dysfunction stems from basing the training operation on a customer-service foundation. Training is only partially a service operation. In its most strategic manifestation, it is a partnering and consultative function.

The most important operational priorities of a training function should be to analyze business needs and issues, to plan and implement learning interventions that will address needs and issues, and *then to do everything possible to ensure that learning-acquired capabilities get applied in improved on-the-job performance*. Because of the separation and the compartmentalization of the training department, one of the most problematic tasks is helping to ensure the transfer of new learning into performance that drives business results. And the key to attacking this big deficiency is to engage the line manager customer (bosses of trainees) as partners and co-operators. In contrast, a customer-service focus implies that the customer need only sit back and be served. In the training business, if we are to expect and achieve results, nothing could be further from the truth. The trainee-manager customer needs to get up, pay attention, get on board with the goals of the training, and play a very active role in making sure that the goals are achieved. Any conceptual models and frameworks that point the training department away from this reality are headed in the wrong direction and dig the low-impact hole deeper.

Irrelevant and Suboptimal Metrics

One can review decades-old issues of training publications and programs from professional association conferences and see that the topics of measurement, assessing impact, and program evaluation were hot topics. Today, they are still hot topics. Training leaders have yet to figure out and adopt practical methods for measuring impact. Rigorous methodologies are available, but they are mostly too complex and expensive. On the other hand there are simpler methods, such as quarterly follow-ups and automated surveys of trainees and their managers, that tend to be quicker and easier for the training function. Because they put a burden on trainees and their managers, however, they frequently are plagued by low response rates and often produce only superficial, subjective, and unverified data. This shortage of useful, practical, and valid measures has led to widespread over-reliance on simple measures, which perniciously drive training operations in the wrong strategic direction. The most common measure is the end-of-session trainee opinion survey (sarcastically referred to as the “smile sheet”), which is used by most training functions for nearly all of their training programs and services. This simplest form of training measurement, has very little to do with genuine business value or impact and tends to distract training departments from devoting evaluation efforts on what really matters: did the training help trainees improve capability and performance and produce a positive outcome for the organization? In the absence of other measures, however, trainee opinion scores have become a substitute for evaluating effectiveness.

Once these scores take on any form of importance in an organization, behaviors to boost the scores are bound to follow. Unfortunately, almost none of the actions and improvements that

can increase trainee satisfaction scores actually drive improvements in value or impact. Efforts and resources are devoted to making the training event itself better, but considerably more organizational value could be generated by investing these resources in helping trainees apply their newly learned skills more effectively on the job.

A second category of measures for training efficacy are related to costs. These measures also divert attention away from useful evaluations of training. Reducing costs is almost always a good idea but only as long as you still get what you needed when you made the decision to pay for it. Most training-cost decisions, however, are made in the vacuum of few or no impact measures. This is dangerous. If you have no idea what you are getting in terms of value, then the lower-cost service always looks like the better deal.

A third set of measures that training departments gravitate toward out of convenience (and maybe desperation for some hard metrics) revolve around enrollments. Because training budgets are based on the number of employees to be served, filling seats in training classes and earning positive reviews displaces more serious metrics, such as whether business needs are being met or performance improvements are being achieved. When it comes time to seek or justify training budgets, the common approach is to show how many employees received service: that is, how many training hours were provided, workshops delivered, or training classes completed. In fact, however, the hours of training provided and numbers of employees served are cost metrics. There is no escaping the fact that an hour of training provided is a cost, and an hour of trainee time spent in training is a cost; neither metric says a whit about value or results. Should training leaders shun these misdirecting metrics and, instead, stick their necks out to be evaluated on (and held accountable for) business impact achieved?

Sell, Sell, Sell!

Training leaders are trapped by organizational budgeting realities that operate across all economic conditions, but especially in tough economic times when training leaders attempt to fend off attacks on their budgets. They try to stretch their resources to serve the largest-possible audience and to keep their per-employee costs at what will be viewed as a reasonable level. Once in this defensive mode, they initiate efforts to enlarge their audience, to improve capacity utilization by getting more seats filled in each class, to fill orders for training quickly and efficiently, and to expand their product line to increase enrollments and please all interests. In short, they begin to travel down the sales and marketing path of drumming up more training customers and business, creating glossy course catalogs or slick web sites to drive up the number of training classes and participants. These sales and marketing efforts get in the way of the essential goal for the training department: to increase organizational effectiveness and results by improving employee capability and performance on the job.

Selling in its highest and best form is aimed at being sure customers get what they need and what will serve them best; selling in its more pernicious tactical form aims to maximize the distribution of services and products. As training leaders feel pressure to show that their services are being used and thus at least nominally to justify their budgets, the more pernicious sales efforts gain momentum. The goal of becoming a trusted advisor to the business becomes only a faint memory. Would it be principled courage or foolish bravado to attempt to defend one's budget on business results achieved rather than number of people trained?

Satisficing: Settling for Good Enough

The term "satisficing" was coined by Herbert Simon, who was awarded the Noble Prize for Economics in 1978 for his pioneering

research into the decision-making process within organizations. In broad terms, the concept is used to define a decision-making approach that accepts a “good enough” option that meets the minimum requirements versus one that aims to maximize results. As discussed above, the training function is spread thin across the task of delivering a wide array of learning initiatives. When new strategies, regulations, systems, or technologies loom on the organizational horizon, there is a knee-jerk response to get the word out, to get everyone on board, to get everyone singing from the same sheet of music, and so forth. In other words, the focus is on getting the training done fast, rather than making sure it yields the maximum business impact.

Faced with the continuously increasing demands for training and all the pressures we have described in this chapter (e.g., the Mr. Goodwrench Syndrome, the Training-Impact Death Spiral, and the need to meet a variety of training requests), training leaders encounter daunting obstacles to doing things the right way. Self-survival dictates doing just enough to cover all the requests and to get things done: that is, satisficing. Combine these pressures time after time, program after program, initiative after initiative, and soon even the most optimistic and competent training leader will make compromises in order to get by. After all, if the training sessions are engaging enough and educational enough to earn good reviews and if all the budget constraints are honored, things will be OK. Executives and line managers won't give us the time, resources, or support that the training needs, so we can't worry about whether this training will actually produce measurable results for the business. Isn't the tenacity and conviction required to fight the constant battles more than can reasonably be expected from mere mortals? And so perfectly mediocre wins the day.

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE HOLE: A CULTURE OF LOW EXPECTATIONS

The forces and practices described above combine, though subtly and over time, to deepen the hole that training is in and to perpetuate the pattern of marginal returns from increasingly larger investments in training. The investments yield far less business impact than organizations need to be competitive and successful—far less, frankly, than any organization should expect and settle for.

Paying Too Much for Too Little

The limited business results produced by the small proportion of trainees who actually use their training are far too expensive. Costs of training are spread across all participants, regardless of whether they use their learning to improve job performance or not. But the return on this investment is realized only in that proportion of employees who apply learning effectively on the job. Imagine that the fully loaded cost per trainee is \$2,000 for a training event and that 100 trainees participate in the training. The total cost for this training is \$200,000. Imagine further that only twenty of the 100 trainees end up using their training in important on-the-job applications that yield value—a highly probable result. Looked at from a cost-per-impact perspective, this training actually costs \$10,000 per trainee, far more expensive than the reported cost suggests and far too much for the gains typically realized. No wonder training departments stick with a per-trainee cost budget!

The real issue is *not* that companies are spending too much on training overall. Instead, the real issue is that they are spending far too much when the returns they are getting are just a fraction of what they could and should be.

Too Much Money Left on the Table

In one instance of poor return on investment in training, a company that manufactures construction equipment conducted marketing training for its directors and managers but only three trainees out of a total of thirty implemented their training. The good news is that they used it to such worthwhile effect that they produced results worth hundreds of thousands of dollars in increased revenues. The bad news, however, is that the training was wasted on the other twenty-seven trainees who did not make use of it. Not only did the company have to pay for their training, but it also had to suffer the expense of their lost productivity while they were in the training that they did not use. Adding insult to this injury, their managers probably were further convinced that training does not pay off, since they saw no benefit from the training they paid for.

But the biggest loss to the company that sponsored this training was the lost opportunity to gain more financial benefit from application of the training. Had the training leaders and other stakeholders worked more effectively together to identify and address problems that blocked application of the training, they might have seen another three, six, nine, or perhaps even a lot more participants use their training. Had merely six more of these non-appliers of training used it just half as well as did the top three users, the return on investment (ROI) for this initiative would have doubled.

The bottom line at the bottom of the hole is that too many of us—training leaders, managers, employees, and senior executives—expect too little from training; we are too satisfied with the relatively marginal results we are getting. We know from our evaluation studies that training has sometimes had a profound and lasting effect on people, changing their performance in ways that matter a great deal to them and their organizations. The

problem is *not* that training does not work well when it works; it is that it does not work that well often enough. Training successes should be the norm, not the exception.

Courageous training leaders are ready and willing to confront this truth. They are ready to climb up on a platform and promise more. They know that the most disturbing consequence of training that does not work as well as it should is the missed opportunity to increase competitive advantage and success for their organizations and their employees. They also know that to get training out of the hole it is in, they must have the vision and courage to confront and change the practices and mind-sets that keep making the hole deeper. The Four Pillars are the platform these bold leaders stand on to ensure their learning initiatives help produce measurable business impact for their organizations.

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