

# TRAIN-TO-INGRAIN GUIDEBOOK



***How to Implement a Reinforcement-based  
Approach to Learning and Development That  
Achieves Permanent, Measurable Improvements  
in Workplace Performance and Positive Impacts  
on Business Results***

***Dennis E. Coates, Ph.D.***

Also by Dennis E. Coates, Ph.D.:

*Self-Development Toolkit: 10 Strategies and 10 Tools to Help You Improve  
Your Performance*

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## INTRODUCTION

The concepts and practices described in this guidebook evolved from decades of delivering world-class assessment and training programs to organizations. Early on, success in these endeavors was all too often mixed with the realization that in most cases, the solutions I provided ultimately had little or no long-term impact on behavior.

My study of the research surrounding this issue confirmed what hundreds of clients and colleagues had been reporting – that this experience is practically universal. I learned that the problem isn't with the programs themselves, but with the organizational context in which they are deployed. Simply stated, training and development programs fail to create lasting changes in performance because organizations typically don't provide adequate follow-up reinforcement of the desired behaviors and skills.

Why is reinforcement so essential? How much reinforcement is needed? What strategies deliver the most effective reinforcement?

Until recently, HR professionals haven't fully understood these issues. The answer was provided by the branch of neuroscience that focuses on what happens in the brain when someone learns. I made an important discovery – that there are physical reasons for the fact that, without a substantial period of structured reinforcement, changing ingrained behavior patterns is practically impossible. The Train-to-Ingrain methodology is based on this discovery. With the physical realities of learning in mind, Train-to-Ingrain blends related best practices and proven technologies into a realistic method for reinforcing and ingraining new behavior patterns.

The Train-to-Ingrain approach evolved in lengthy discussions with Dave Erdman, president of Vital Learning Corporation. Both of us shared the same understanding that most training fails to change behavior because organizations almost never follow up with enough structured reinforcement to achieve that result. In 2005 we formed a strategic alliance to integrate 20/20 Insight GOLD with the Vital Learning Leadership Curriculum, which supports a model Train-to-Ingrain solution. Throughout its many revisions, this guidebook was heavily influenced by Dave's creative thinking and editorial guidance.

In addition, the Train-to-Ingrain concept was informed by the published work of several experts in the field of learning transfer, including Broad, Newstrom, Brinkerhoff, Apking, Phillips, Mager, Kirkpatrick, Wick and others, and I refer to them frequently.

My contribution in this context is to establish a scientific basis for why all this effort is necessary and to translate concepts into practical methods that will actually change behavior. The purpose of this guidebook is to help learning professionals and organizations modify the way they structure training and other performance improvement programs to achieve what I've referred to as "the Holy Grail of HRD" – *permanent, measurable improvements in performance and positive impacts on business results*. I call this document a "guidebook" because it describes the why, what and how of implementing a customized Train-to-Ingrain approach.

I strongly recommend that you read Chapter 1 first. In order to avoid the mistakes of the past, you need to know why traditional approaches to training and development haven't succeeded in changing work habits. Once you understand that the brain has to grow new neuronal connections in order to change a pattern of behavior, you'll appreciate why a substantial amount of follow-up reinforcement is needed to make this happen.

You'll learn that Train-to-Ingrain focuses on "the system" to address these realities. It gives organizations a practical, reinforcement-intensive method for transferring classroom learning to permanent improvements in workplace performance.

At the heart of Train-to-Ingrain are two imperatives:

1. Integrating assessment and training with enough *follow-up reinforcement* so that newly learned skills and practices are permanently ingrained as improved individual performance
2. Involving *direct managers* as workplace performance coaches of their subordinate team members throughout this ongoing assessment, training and reinforcement process

The result is a mutually supportive partnership among learners, their direct managers and training staff that I call the "Learning Triangle."

Chapter 2 describes how to get started quickly with three actions:

- Acquire integrated assessment and training technologies that support ongoing skill reinforcement.
- Involve direct managers in the learning process. Define their staff development responsibilities and hold them accountable.
- Measure performance improvement. Assess skill areas before and after learning to establish developmental goals and accountability.

Many factors influence whether classroom instruction transfers to permanent improvements in workplace performance. Training and development, seen by most organizations as an intervention or event, needs to be viewed as an ongoing process – a routine aspect of work. Managers’ responsibilities should be enriched to include active involvement in the development of direct reports. Trainers, managers and learners need to interact and be held accountable for performance improvement. Policies and practices that inadvertently create barriers to skill reinforcement will need to be modified. All levels of management need to support these and other changes. In short, Train-to-Ingrain addresses the major factors with a systems-wide strategy. Chapter 3 describes how to build on the foundation of initial successes by optimizing eight critical areas within the organization.

In a world of cause and effect, actions have consequences; and the failure to optimize any of these critical areas will significantly degrade or derail your efforts to achieve lasting improvements in individual performance. However, Train-to-Ingrain isn’t a rigid concept, and there are several ways to implement these initiatives. How you customize your own approach to Train-to-Ingrain will depend on your learning culture and what you’re already doing now.

Chapter 4 provides a narrative illustration of how a fictional organization launched Train-to-Ingrain and subsequently conducted a leadership development program to achieve lasting changes in behavior. The story illustrates a best-case scenario from the perspectives of the key role players in the Learning Triangle: a three-way partnership between trainers, learners and the learner’s direct manager.

By necessity, most of the work of skill mastery has to happen after classroom instruction is over; and only the participants’ direct managers have the responsibility, authority, and oversight to give ongoing support, feedback, encouragement and coaching in the workplace.

The Appendices include several tools and references that will help you launch a customized Train-to-Ingrain approach to learning and development within your organization.

Train-to-Ingrain isn't a quick fix and it isn't a one-time program. It's an overarching framework that will achieve behavior change with practically any assessment, training or developmental activities. Throughout this guidebook I illustrate the power of this approach by referring to two technologies that have been used together successfully in leadership development: the 20/20 Insight GOLD feedback assessment system and the Vital Learning Leadership Curriculum. They are the flagship products of Performance Support Systems, Inc., and Vital Learning Corporation, respectively – the original co-developers of the Train-to-Ingrain concept.

Both 20/20 Insight GOLD and the Vital Learning Leadership Curriculum are behavior-based, are designed to support ongoing reinforcement, and are fully integrated with each other. The synergy of these technologies effectively supports an ongoing process of leadership assessment, training and reinforcement, making them an ideal example of Train-to-Ingrain in action.

## Chapter 1: REINFORCEMENT

### —The Essential Element That Changes Behavior —

*Our first-line managers know the business, but in fact most of them need better people skills. There are times when you can sense the friction and the tension. Morale is low in some areas, and we've lost some of our best folks. We've never actually achieved the positive, high-energy culture we've been looking for, and it has affected our bottom line.*

*A few years ago we brought in a top-flight leadership effectiveness program. The trainers were fantastic and our managers raved about it. We were satisfied that it was money well spent. Afterward we noticed that a few managers showed some improvement, but the others weren't using the new skills. They were basically the same people doing the same things.*

*A year later I look around and I can't say there's any noticeable improvement. It's hard to believe that such a high-quality program has had so little impact. When I think about what it cost us, I'm very disappointed.*

The preceding account is a fair summary of the frustration reported from numerous executives and HR professionals over the years. It's a persistent theme, and what they're saying is that employees desperately need better leadership from their managers and that traditional training and development programs haven't delivered the results they hoped for.

### HRD's Most Costly, Enduring Problem

The research indicates that this shortfall has existed for decades and that it isn't limited to leadership development. It has become known as the "transfer of training problem." Mosel (1957) reports "mounting evidence that shows that very often the training makes little or no difference in job behavior," concluding that skill mastery requires not just training, but a workplace environment that encourages using the skills: "rewards and punishments, incentives and deterrents in the job situation."

Baldwin and Ford (1982) claim that the failure of training programs to change behavior is widespread: "There is a growing recognition of a 'transfer problem' in organizational training today. It is estimated that while American industries annually spend up to \$100 billion on training and development, not more than 10% of these expenditures actually result in transfer to the job." Broad and Newstrom (2001) cite less dramatic but no less shocking numbers: "Considering all types of training and low levels of transfer found by HRD researchers, a generous assumption is that perhaps 50% of all training content is still being applied a year after training delivery. Considering our rough estimate of \$50 billion spent on formal training per year, that means a loss of \$25 billion a year to organizations for training not fully used on the job."



Brinkerhoff and Apking (2001) conclude: "Almost all organizational training is a marginal intervention and has only slight effects on performance improvement." Further: "If we define 'training impact' as simply the transfer of knowledge and skills to on-the-job performance, research indicates that impact of training is realized only for about 15 percent of all training participants." They aren't saying that training never transfers to on-the-job performance. There will always be self-starters and lifelong learners who believe in what they've learned and persist in spite of barriers to change. But these exceptions can't deliver the return on investment executives are looking for.

Mostly the experts are saying that the problem typically isn't the training itself, but what happens afterward. Newstrom's (1983) survey of trainers to identify and rank order the most serious barriers to transfer finds that the most significant shortfall was "lack of reinforcement on the job." Saari, Johnson, McLaughlin and Zimmerle (1988) claim that any form of follow-up is rare. Zenger, Folkman and Sherwin (2005) concur: "Talk to any group of layman or professionals about what is broken in the current learning and development process, and most will tell you it's the lack of serious post-training follow-through."

When executives invest in training and development, they do so expecting that the programs will achieve lasting improvements in performance. So why have they failed to invest in the necessary follow-up reinforcement effort?

To be fair, this research has been reported mostly in human resource publications, which rarely capture the attention of executives. And while it makes sense that follow-up reinforcement is crucial to changing behavior, none of the researchers offers a scientific explanation of why. To modify the way they approach performance improvement, executives will need a compelling reason.

In the past, HR/learning professionals have not been able to provide those reasons. They are just as perplexed and frustrated as anyone that their best efforts haven't delivered a satisfactory return on investment.

However, a straightforward scientific explanation for why most classroom learning fails to transfer to permanent improvements in workplace performance does exist. It is found not in the journals of HRD, but in the recent discoveries of neuroscience.

### **The Core Insight: What It Takes to Change Behavior**

What does it take to master a new skill? The answer lies in what happens in the brain when a new behavior pattern establishes itself. It's important to understand this insight, because it explains why even a highly rated, enthusiastically received developmental program can fail to achieve lasting changes in workplace performance.

Scientists have been telling us for over a decade that learning involves physical changes in the brain. Eric R. Kandel received the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 2000 for his pioneering work in this area. Kandel and Hawkins (1992) reported that "stimuli that produce long-term memory for sensitization and classical conditioning lead to an increase in the number of pre-synaptic terminals." They found that when the release of neurotransmitters between nerve cells goes up, eventually additional dendrites grow, multiplying contacts with neighboring cells. Their conclusion: "Our brains are constantly changing anatomically as we learn." Scientists continue to replicate and support these findings, and learning professionals have integrated them into mainstream educational texts (Sousa, 2000).

There's a huge difference between conceptual learning and mastering a new skill. It's the difference between *knowing how* to do something and *being able to do it* routinely and comfortably on the job. In a busy workplace, people can't reinvent their behavior every time they need to get something done. They have to rely on

ingrained behavior patterns. The challenge is to replace well-established problem behavior patterns with more effective ones.

To appreciate how hard it is to accomplish this, you need to understand the following about how the brain establishes new behavior patterns:

- A skill is a set of behaviors executed automatically and consistently. What enables a skill is a specific network of brain cells. The function of these physically interconnected neurons is to efficiently trigger the chain of perception, analysis and decision-making needed for a specific pattern of cognitive, verbal and physical behavior.
- During the past decade, brain scientists have discovered what happens in the brain when a person learns and how these neural networks establish themselves. They found that *repeating a specific behavior pattern over and over stimulates the involved brain cells to grow extensions (dendrites) to connect with each other*. With enough repetition, all the related brain cells eventually connect, and the new behavior becomes an ingrained pattern. What felt awkward in the beginning eventually feels comfortable and natural.
- It takes a fair amount of time for this brain cell growth-and-connection process to complete itself, which explains why it takes so much practical application and reinforcement to master a skill. While it doesn't take long for the brain to store an image, a fact or a concept, laying the groundwork for a behavior pattern can take many months of diligent repetition.
- Interpersonal skills – which form the core of leadership, teamwork, sales and service performance – are especially complex. This makes them more difficult to ingrain, and an even longer period of repetition and reinforcement is needed.
- The challenge of establishing a new behavior pattern is made more difficult by having to replace existing problem work habits that are already ingrained – the result of decades of reinforcement. When participants return to the workplace, at first their new skills feel awkward, and initial efforts don't yield the desired results. After repeated frustration and without a supportive environment, most people give in to the pressures of work and fall back on their old, comfortable habits.

These are the realities of changing behavior, developing skills and improving individual performance. With this perspective, it is no mystery why so many first-rate training courses have failed to produce behavioral change.

The implication for training and development is sobering: *if you want to improve an employee's performance, you have to "rewire" the neural network that enables the old behavior pattern.* As I've said, even in the best case this means the desired behavior will need to be repeated and reinforced for many months.

Do you play golf or tennis? Are you a good swimmer? Have you ever worked with a coach to improve your technique? How long did you practice what your instructor was telling you before you could do it correctly without thinking about it?

If you're one of the millions of fans who follow the career of golfer Tiger Woods, you may remember that 2004 wasn't one of his best years. Even though he had already achieved greatness at an early age, at the beginning of the season Tiger made a number of changes in his swing. The changes were designed to make the world's best golf swing even better. But then Tiger struggled all year, winning only one tournament and finishing fourth in total winnings.



However, at the end of that year he won two post-season tournaments back-to-back, and in 2005 he won his fourth Masters. He placed second in the U.S. Open and won the British Open, leading the field from start to finish. He finished the year with six victories, and he was ranked first in the world with about \$10 million in winnings. In 2006 he repeated this pace of winning, dominating the PGA tour.

The point is that *excellent instruction is only the beginning.* Tiger Woods hits golf balls all day long nearly every day. And yet, he had to invest an entire year of persistent effort before he ingrained the new patterns that improved his game. Another point is that Tiger could not have made this effort without a strong internal motivation to change. His desire to have the best possible swing, to compete, to win the major championships and to be the best golfer in the world are what kept him at the practice tee. And he had great coaching. It's common knowledge that he has invested as much as a million dollars a year for a swing coach who will keep him on track.

Remember, interpersonal skills are more complex than sport skills, so they take longer to ingrain. A well designed three-day or even a weeklong course may do a good job of introducing new skills—that is, create knowledge and familiarity.

But given what needs to happen in the brain, these courses are simply incapable of establishing new behavior patterns.

Clearly, the development process needs to continue well beyond the classroom. What's needed is an extension of these programs into the workplace: a structured, supervised framework for applying and reinforcing desired skills over time. What's needed is for performance improvement to become a routine aspect of work itself.

Making ongoing reinforcement a permanent feature of learning and performance improvement programs is an achievable goal, and it will be worth the effort. An ingrained skill is like walking, running or riding a bicycle. Once the brain cells are physically connected, the only thing that can disconnect them is the atrophy of old age, injury or death. Like building an Interstate highway next to an old country road, new patterns can replace old ones. If you do the work to replace an old behavior with a more effective one, the newly ingrained pattern will be virtually permanent.

In summary, there's a physical limit to how fast a person can ingrain an improved skill or work habit. It takes more than assessment and more than training to make permanent changes in behavior. However, when you integrate behavior-based assessment with behavior-based training, when you follow this with ongoing on-the-job reinforcement, when you motivate learners by holding them accountable, when participants receive effective coaching, and when you then implement these and other solutions in a systemic way, you can and will achieve permanent improvements in individual performance.

### **Train-to-Ingain: A Reinforcement-based Solution**

Traditionally, an HRD event or intervention is acquired to fix a performance problem. The process is intended to flow something like this:

#### **PERFORMANCE PROBLEM**

**- Performance Analysis**

**- Developmental program**

**IMPROVED PERFORMANCE**

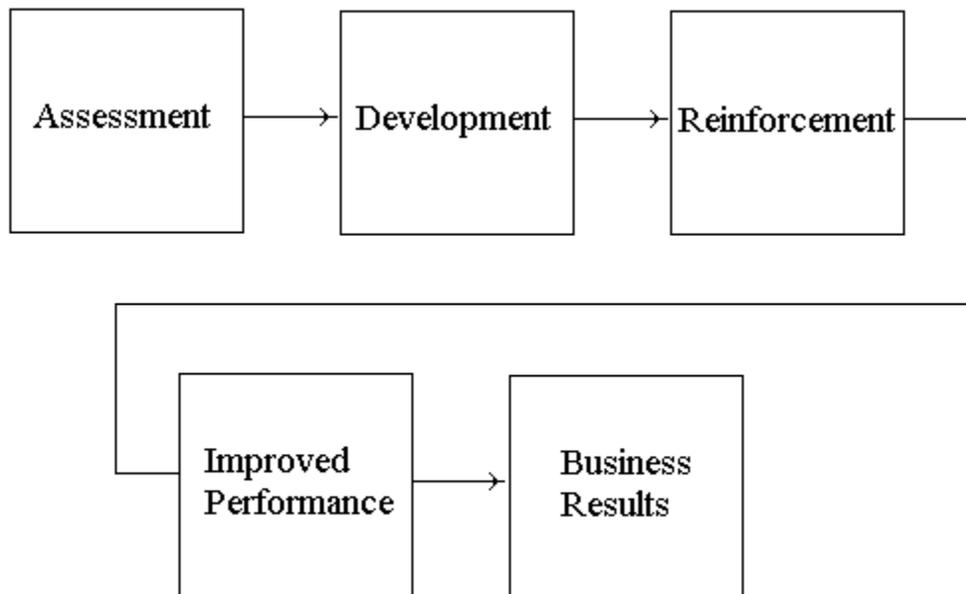
In the best case, the selection of the developmental program is based on one of the many instructional design models, which attempt to diagnose the performance problem before prescribing a solution.

In the worst case, a program is selected based on its marketing, organizational politics, cost, consensus or somebody's opinion. In any case, these events or interventions almost never include a program of follow-up reinforcement, and so they fail to achieve lasting improvements in performance.

So if an assessment or training program – conducted as a singular event or intervention – can't be counted on to change behavior, then what can? What must you do differently? How much time and expense will be involved?

Train-to-Ingrain isn't a single program, event or intervention. It's a new contextual framework for conducting such programs. It's an *ongoing process* in which efforts to ingrain new skills and improve an individual's performance become a routine aspect of work. At the heart of Train-to-Ingrain is the imperative to *provide enough follow-up reinforcement to achieve permanent, measurable changes in behavior, improved workplace performance and positive impacts on the bottom line.*

In concept, a Train-to-Ingrain process may be visualized as follows:



Implicit in this simple model are five important enhancements to the traditional approach, which will be described in more detail below:

1. Developmental programs are preceded by benchmark skill assessments
2. Developmental programs are followed by enough reinforcement to ingrain the new skills
3. All three components – Assessment, Development and Reinforcement – are integrated into a single, ongoing program
4. The process is an ongoing aspect of everyday work
5. The primary influencer during reinforcement is the learner's direct manager, who provides performance coaching

Assessment and follow-up reinforcement are the “missing links” of most training and development programs. Quite a bit of supervised application, feedback, encouragement and coaching are needed to ingrain a new pattern of behavior, so this can only take place during day-to-day work. If new behavior patterns aren't reinforced on the job, participants will eventually fall back on their old, comfortable ways of doing things.

Effective follow-up reinforcement has four elements:

1. Coaching
2. Ongoing development
3. Follow-up feedback and assessment
4. Accountability

**1. Coaching.** During the several months that it will take to make a new behavior pattern feel familiar, comfortable and automatic, along the way a typical learner will experience moments of uncertainty, awkwardness, failure or embarrassment. It makes a big difference to have someone who can advise and encourage – a performance coach. But who will best fill that essential role?

Executive coaches are experts in people skills. They can be a very high-quality one-on-one resource during the period in which skills are ingrained. Although they're rarely able to observe learners in action, they can be an invaluable sounding board. However, because of the expense involved, professional coaches are usually hired only for executives.

For the rest of the organization, coaching must come from internal resources. Trainers may have good coaching skills; but they're usually busy preparing and delivering programs, and there aren't enough of them to go around. Mentors are

a possible coaching resource, but they lack oversight and authority. What they say and do may not be in synch with the priorities of bosses.

The bottom line is that *no one can take the place of the learner's direct manager*, who is responsible for directing, motivating, observing, evaluating and improving the employee's performance. The direct manager has the authority to tell employees what to do and what not to do. By default, the manager creates the work environment in which skill application occurs. He or she alone decides whether an employee will even have the opportunity to use newly learned skills.

The involvement of the direct manager is crucial. *Whether an employee changes a work habit depends on whether the direct manager accepts the role to coach and develop the employee on the job.* If some managers feel inadequate to this task, coaching courses are available to augment their skills.

**2. Ongoing development.** Since it takes months to establish a new behavior pattern, the key is to think of performance improvement as an ongoing process, a routine aspect of work itself. Ideally, people learn from experience on the job, improving their skills continuously.

Books, articles, audiotapes and videotapes are helpful resources. Beyond that, trainers can give participants structured challenges that require them to analyze their workplace experiences. "Brown bag" lunch meetings with trainers, co-participants and others are good venues for reviewing videos and discussing the difficulties of applying new skills. When distance or time make these discussions impractical, virtual meetings are possible. Online forums give mentors, co-participants and team members a convenient venue to share experiences, information, advice, feedback and encouragement.

Ideally, the resources used in training continue to be helpful references during reinforcement. Using leadership development as an example, the Vital Learning Leadership Curriculum materials contain numerous follow-up exercises, worksheets, guides and references specifically designed for continued learning and reinforcement. The online instructional units and videos that present positive behavior models are available to participants for up to a year for reinforcement purposes. Related books, tapes, videos and websites are recommended in the workbooks and online.

**3. Follow-up feedback and assessment.** You have to practice a new skill a long time before becoming comfortable with it. Along the way, you need to know how you're doing. If you're like most people, you aren't the best judge of your

own behavior. You don't see yourself the way others see you, so it's hard for you to know how your actions are affecting others. For the most objective viewpoint possible, you need a mirror held up to your behavior. You need feedback from the people who work around you.

Because of a boss's frequent contact and authority, the direct manager is usually in the best position to give verbal feedback in the workplace. Other valuable feedback may come from team members or mentors.

Since most people are either unskilled or uncomfortable giving feedback, the most effective way of gathering and presenting this input is 360-degree (multi-source) assessment. Because surveys are administered before and after training, scores can be compared to show how much improvement has taken place. Post-training surveys can be repeated periodically for a year or more after training. This keeps participants informed of progress and motivates them to persist.

**4. Accountability.** Training programs are a big investment, and executives want to know if they're getting a payoff. They want evidence that participants are applying their new skills on the job – that the value of their improved performance exceeds the cost of their training. This is the impetus behind what's commonly known as "Level 3" and "Level 4" evaluations of training.

But trainers aren't the only role players who affect the outcome. If learners don't make a good-faith effort to change their behavior, the skills will never be ingrained. And because of their responsibility and authority, direct managers are in a unique position to influence what happens as learners try to apply skills on the job. Even executives have an impact, because they're the decision-makers who foster support and commit resources for learning and reinforcement. Realistically, all these roles have a significant impact, and everyone involved shares accountability.

The most powerful way to establish accountability uses the same technology mentioned above: pre-course and post-course assessment. 360-degree performance feedback identifies not what people know, but what how well they're doing their jobs. The behaviors that are the focus of the assessment are the same behaviors that are the focus of the training. The averages of scaled ratings create an objective pre-course measurement of skill levels, and the identical post-course assessment provides data about skills several months after training. Any improvements in performance are indicated by improvements in scores. The consolidated feedback is presented to participants, and a summary of

skill scores is given to supervisors and HR staff. These measurements can also be used to calculate return on investment (ROI).

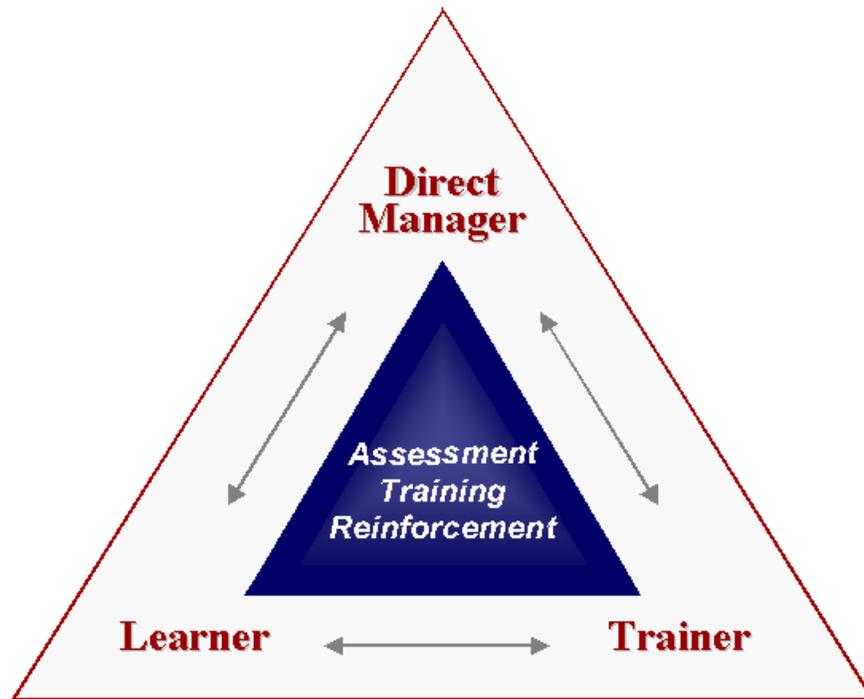
Accountability is solidified when the skills and techniques taught in training are integrated into the daily business practices of the organization. Too often, well-intentioned development programs fail because the ideas presented in the classroom are not part of the organization's standards and practices. When operating standards mirror what participants are expected to follow once they are back on the job, you have maximum accountability.

This brief summary of the essentials of reinforcement clarifies why the direct manager has to get involved. No one else has the leadership responsibility, frequent contact and authority to guide the behavior of the developing employee in the workplace.

And yet, a common mindset among managers is to view employee development as the responsibility of the HR/training/learning department. This misunderstanding of a boss's leadership role will derail any attempt to ingrain skills. I believe that the impact of direct managers on performance improvement is equal to or greater than that of trainers. In fact, if the participant's boss doesn't get involved in setting expectations, giving feedback, encouraging and coaching, it will be nearly impossible to change an employee's behavior.

In most organizations today, nothing like this partnership exists. According to trainers, many managers are less than cooperative. Will bosses support the training? Indeed, will they even release the individuals for training? Will they contact participants during the course, disrupting their learning – or even worse, call them away from classroom activities? When the course is over, will the participants get a chance to apply the new skills, or will they return to an environment of business as usual? Will managers support all-important follow-up reinforcement programs? All too often, trainers' concerns turn out to be justified.

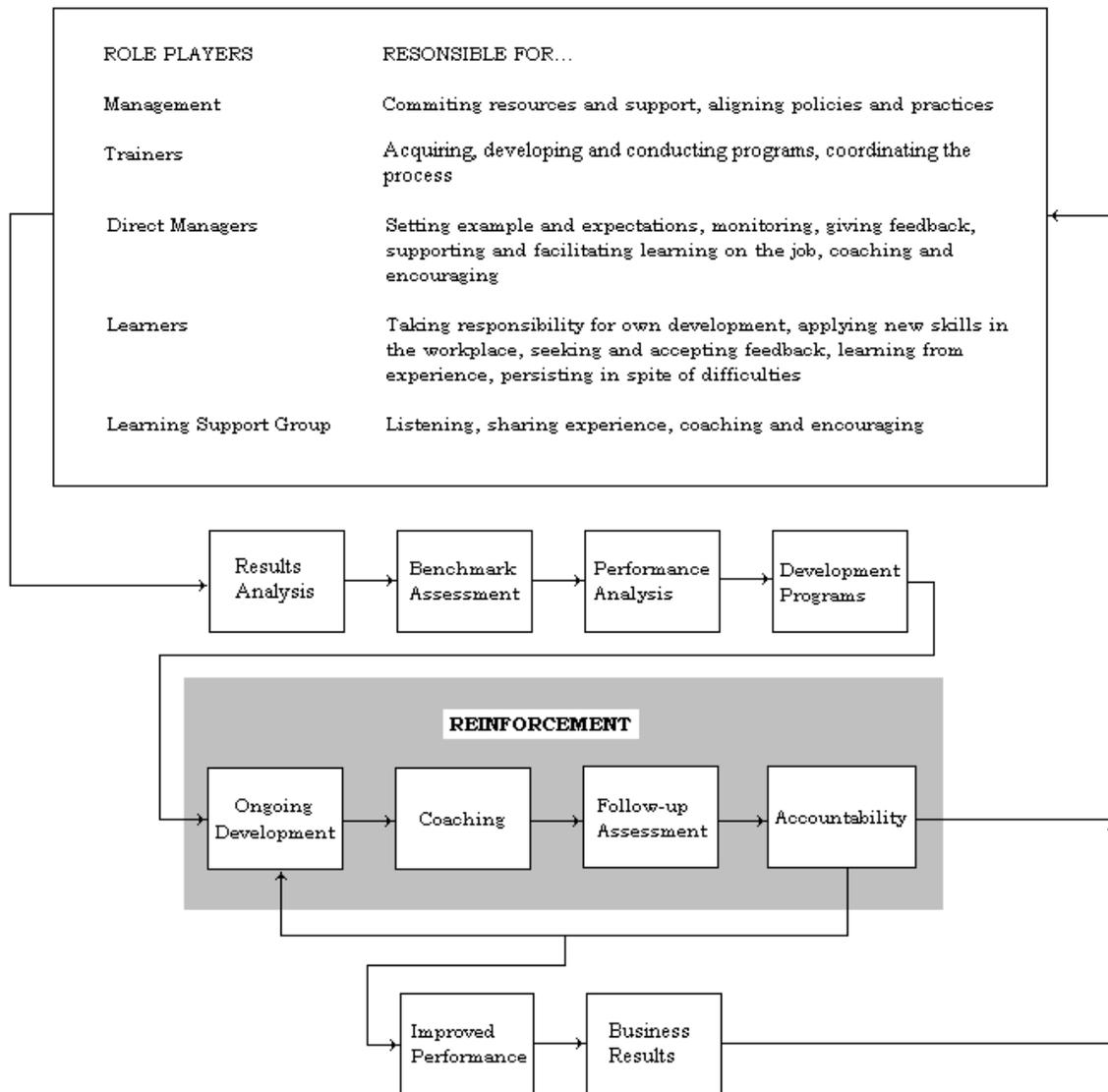
Changing behavior patterns and improving individual performance require physical changes in the brain. It's virtually impossible to achieve this without an ongoing program of follow-up reinforcement that involves the learner's direct manager. For this reason, Train-to-Ingrain defines a key role for direct managers, drawing them into a three-way partnership with trainers and learners that I call the Learning Triangle.



Train-to-Ingrain isn't a rigid concept. It encourages an organization to evaluate eight critical areas within an organization that influence whether newly acquired skills are ultimately permanently ingrained:

- **COMMITMENT** - Support follow-up reinforcement
- **COACHING** - Prepare direct managers for their development role
- **FOLLOW-UP** - Integrate reinforcement programs with assessment and training programs
- **ACCOUNTABILITY** - Measure performance improvement and calculate ROI
- **TRAINING FOR TRANSFER** - Incorporate learning strategies that promote application and reinforcement of skills
- **LEARNING NETWORKS** - Coordinate support for reinforcement
- **FOCUS** - Identify training needs that will have a positive impact on business results
- **CULTURE** - Align the organization's policies and practices to support performance improvement

The expanded model below illustrates the roles and process flow in more detail:



In most cases, an organization that wants to achieve lasting changes in workplace behavior can customize an approach that's compatible with its learning culture and work to install changes over the long term.

As this chapter suggests, many factors influence the difficult process of transferring classroom learning to lasting improvements in workplace performance.

However, getting started can involve some relatively simple actions that will produce immediate positive results. I explain how in the next chapter.

**The BOTTOM LINE of Chapter 1**

***Changing behavior patterns and improving individual performance require physical changes in the brain. It's virtually impossible to achieve this without an ongoing program of follow-up reinforcement that involves the learner's direct manager.***

## Chapter 2: GET STARTED QUICKLY

### – Three Actions You Can Take Immediately for Positive Results –



The decades-long quest to transfer what is learned in the classroom to improved performance in the workplace has been a confounding one.

For one thing, it isn't easy to change behavior patterns, because they've been ingrained over time. To correct performance issues, new behaviors have to be introduced and consistently reinforced over the long term. This means following up programs with enough continued learning, feedback, coaching and accountability to stimulate the growth of new neuronal connections

that eventually take the place of old ones.

Unaware of this reality, organizations have wasted billions of dollars annually investing in learning programs that fail to change behavior.

The greater challenge of the quest for this "Holy Grail" is that the solution doesn't involve fixing just one thing. A myriad of variables within an organization influence whether learning is reinforced until new behavior patterns are established. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Train-to-Ingrain achieves permanent, measurable improvements in performance by optimizing eight critical areas that impact on learning transfer. Chapter 3 describes several options for addressing each of these areas.

However, even decision-makers who've been burned repeatedly by failed programs may find this systems-wide strategy daunting. A predictable reaction: "This seems like more than we can undertake right now."

The good news is that it's neither necessary nor desirable to try to improve all areas at once. The best approach is to get positive results quickly by doing three things, which can be accomplished in a very short period of time:

1. Acquire integrated assessment and training technologies that support ongoing skill reinforcement.
2. Involve direct managers in the learning process. Define their staff development responsibilities and hold them accountable.
3. Measure performance improvement. Assess skill areas before and after instruction to establish developmental goals and accountability.

These actions will produce immediate successes, and your organization can then build on this foundation with a gradual, tailored strategy to optimize the key areas that influence learning transfer. The purpose of this article is to explain how to carry out these three “quick start” initiatives effectively.

### **Quick Start Action #1**

#### **Acquire Integrated Assessment and Training Technologies That Support Ongoing Skill Reinforcement**

The immediate goal is to dramatically improve – in the near term – the ability of your developmental programs to create lasting improvements in workplace performance. As a minimum, your organization will need to put into place assessment and training programs that:

- Focus on the behaviors needed in the workplace
- Are compatible and integrated with each other
- Support the four pillars of reinforcement: coaching, continued development, ongoing feedback, and accountability

Laying the foundation for this technology infrastructure is relatively simple:

#### **FIRST – Acquire a versatile, economical multi-source feedback system.**



A robust performance feedback assessment system is absolutely essential, in which learners get feedback from the people who work with them. For assessing leadership, sales, service, team and other interpersonal skill areas, *20/20 Insight GOLD* is an ideal choice for Train-to-Ingrain because it provides quantitative assessment of areas of performance that are otherwise hard to measure.

The system is completely customizable and can support any type of feedback survey, so it can be integrated with practically any training program. It's economical enough to be used as often as needed for reinforcement, because you

can purchase relatively inexpensive permanent individual licenses, permitting frequent feedback and repeat measurements at no extra cost.

**NEXT – Acquire a training program with resources that support an extended period of reinforcement.**

A prime example is leadership development, one of the most critical needs of most organizations. The behavior-based *Vital Learning Leadership Curriculum* is an award-winning 18-unit leadership development series that has built-in reinforcement. It provides access to online video behavior modeling, post-course exercises and resources to help participants apply new skills on the job. It is available in classroom workshops, online e-learning and blended learning solutions.



**THEN – Integrate the assessment with the training program.**

Integration means that the performance feedback survey exactly describes the behavioral outcomes of the training. Both the 20/20 Insight assessment system and the Vital Learning leadership courses are behavior-based, fully support the requirements of an ongoing process of reinforcement, and are already fully integrated with each other.

For leadership development, the combination of these two user-friendly technologies makes it easy to put an off-the-shelf, world-class solution in place very quickly. For other kinds of training, a versatile feedback survey platform such as 20/20 Insight GOLD is the key to quick customization.

**Quick Start Action #2**

**Involve Direct Managers in the Learning Process**

Four major factors affect individual performance:

- Self-awareness
- Competence
- Motivation
- Support

Managers are empowered to influence all these factors, and they lead people by doing so. When focused on developing competence, managers set an example, communicate expectations, demonstrate desired performance, give feedback, and coach performance. Most organizations expect their managers to fulfill these traditional staff development responsibilities. However, some managers still have the perception that performance improvement should be the exclusive responsibility of the training department. This is an erroneous mindset.

Trainers work hard to present the best possible learning programs. But they have the attention of learners for only a few days, while managers interact with their team members for years and can influence career advancement and other personnel decisions. This is why *what direct managers do in the workplace influences individual performance far more than what trainers do in the classroom*. The role of trainers is to introduce skills and behavior models. The reality is that trainers have practically no control over what happens back in the workplace, where new skills must be diligently applied in order to be ingrained.

Changing behavior patterns takes months, not days – even in ideal circumstances. Only the learner’s direct manager is in a position to give enough support, oversight, encouragement, feedback, coaching and reinforcement over the long term to change behavior. In most cases, how well the manager carries out this role will make or break the transfer of new knowledge into permanent improvements in workplace performance – no matter how much was invested in the learning programs.

Up front, you’ll need to do three things to draw direct managers into a “learning triangle” with their direct reports and trainers:

#### **A. Clarify the direct managers’ developmental responsibilities.**

The purpose of this step is to require direct managers to coach and develop their direct reports – to make this a formal aspect of their responsibilities. These expectations should be communicated in writing by upper-level management.

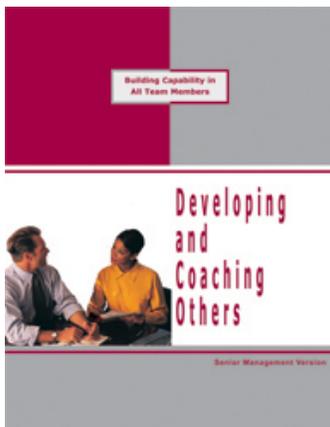
Managers need to accept their role in the Learning Triangle, to become the primary participant in the development of their team members. They need to stay in contact with trainers about assessment, learning and reinforcement programs, in order to meet with team members and help them prepare to make the most of these learning opportunities. They need to clarify expectations and help participants set learning goals.

In the best case, managers will attend the training to refresh familiarity with the skills, so they can set an example for expected behavior. Most important, after training, they need to give direct reports ample opportunities to apply what they've learned and encourage their efforts. In addition to giving feedback about workplace performance, managers can help direct reports learn from experience – both successes and shortfalls.

To clarify what's expected of managers, a simple, effective technique is to give managers a copy of the list contained in Appendix C, along with a directive that they will be held accountable for these responsibilities. The goal is to overcome any uncertainty or reluctance direct managers may have – to shift their paradigm, if necessary.

## **B. Prepare direct managers to be more effective performance coaches.**

Coaching subordinates to improve their skills and job performance is a traditional leadership role for managers. But many managers simply aren't prepared to carry it out effectively. If your managers haven't previously been expected to take responsibility for the day-to-day development of their direct reports, they may lack understanding, relevant skills and confidence.



The most effective immediate solution in this case is Vital Learning Corporation's training module, **"Developing and Coaching Others,"** which was specifically designed to motivate, orient and prepare direct managers for their responsibilities in a successful Train-to-Ingrain process. The program explains what managers need to do and how to do it before, during and after training to reinforce the new skills of subordinates. The program also helps managers develop the skills to effectively handle coaching moments. These consistent efforts by the manager

ensure that direct reports ultimately change behavior patterns and improve performance.

The course also provides post-course reinforcement activities and recommended reading, including John Whitmore's how-to book, *Coaching for Performance* (2002), written specifically for managers and now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.

### **C. Hold managers accountable for carrying out their role as performance coaches.**

First, inform managers that they – and the learners themselves – will be held accountable for how much the direct reports have improved performance.

One effective way to establish accountability is to administer the brief 15-item performance feedback survey, “Developing and Coaching Others,” available in the 20/20 Insight GOLD Survey Library. The survey describes what managers should be doing and mirrors the course objectives of the “Developing and Coaching Others” program described in paragraph B. Using 20/20 Insight GOLD, it can easily be customized to fit your organization’s culture.

The survey is an ideal precursor for the manager’s coaching course. Using 20/20 Insight GOLD, administer the survey before training. Direct reports will provide respondent feedback, and the results will reveal areas of strength and needs for improvement of the direct manager. Let managers know that they’ll be given an identical follow-up assessment in six to twelve months to measure improvement.

Another extremely effective method for holding managers accountable (while holding direct reports and trainers accountable as well) is described in Quick Start Initiative #3. I recommend using both methods.

#### **Quick Start Action #3 Measure Performance Improvement**

When executives invest heavily in any product or service to improve a vital aspect of operations, productivity or profitability, you’d expect at some point to hear the question, “Has performance actually improved? Was it worth all that money?” And what they’re asking for is proof of results – not somebody’s opinion about the program.

When it comes to training, the traditional way of evaluating impact is Donald L. Kirkpatrick's four-level model (2005). Because Level 3 evaluations focus on measuring changes in behavior, in effect they address the transfer of training – whether people are routinely performing in the workplace the skills they learned in the classroom. There is a simple, economical method for generating performance improvement data.

## **BEFORE TRAINING – Administer a pre-course assessment.**

The feedback surveys used in a typical Train-to-Ingrain process are perhaps the most effective technique ever devised for measuring improvements in on-the-job performance. The procedure is simple. Set up a multi-source feedback survey consisting of questions that describe the behaviors taught in training. Administer the survey before training to gather feedback from participants' boss, coworkers and others. Let participants know that the survey will be administered again several months after training. This pre-course diagnostic helps participants set quantified, behavior-based performance improvement goals, so their minds are more focused during learning activities. Knowing that follow-up measurements will be taken later increases their attention and motivation as they work with trainers – the ideal mindset for learning.

## **AFTER TRAINING – Administer a post-course assessment.**

About six months after training, administer the first follow-up feedback survey, using the same respondent group. Since post-course assessments are derived from the pre-course assessment, scores may be easily compared. Improved scores will confirm improved performance. The quantitative and qualitative data will reveal whether areas of performance have improved. Learners and direct managers will find out whether ongoing reinforcement has had the desired effect. For continued feedback and measures of performance improvement, repeat the assessment at the twelve-month and eighteen-month marks.



This simple, commonsense approach to measuring performance improvement requires a technology that can support it: a fully customizable multi-source feedback survey system. Assessment items need to be tailored to exactly mirror the desired behaviors taught in the training program. In other words, assessment and training need to be integrated. Also, the assessment system should have inexpensive unlimited assessment licenses for each participant, which makes it possible to give them all the feedback they'll need after training without additional expense. The 20/20 Insight GOLD onsite feedback platform meets these requirements and is extremely easy to use.

## **FINALLY – Hold the key players accountable.**

Measuring performance improvement provides hard evidence of whether programs are changing behavior, making it possible to hold the key players in the “learning triangle” accountable:

- The learner, who must make a determined effort to change behavior patterns during the lengthy and sometimes frustrating period of reinforcement
- The direct manager, who observes and coaches the subordinate while providing opportunities to apply skills in an encouraging environment
- Trainers, who present behavior-based training that is optimized for skill transfer and who coordinate follow-up programs

Adding behavior-based assessment to behavior-based training in this manner will profoundly improve the effectiveness of your training and development programs.

### **The BOTTOM LINE of Chapter 2**

***You can get started quickly to “make learning stick” by acquiring integrated assessment and training resources, making direct managers responsible for coaching direct reports in the workplace, and measuring performance levels before and after training.***

As you learn more about Train-to-Ingrain, you’ll appreciate that getting started quickly is only the beginning. To achieve maximum results, you’ll need to build on the foundation of these early successes to optimize learning support in all eight critical areas. A number of options are explained in Chapter 3.

## Chapter 3: BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION

### – Eight Critical Areas –

If you implement the three “quick start” strategies recommended in Chapter 2, you’ll experience tangible results. Not many organizations take these simple, commonsense actions that will dramatically improve your ability to transfer classroom learning to workplace performance.

But this is only the beginning. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the eight major factors that influence learning transfer and what you can do to optimize them. At the heart of the Train-to-Ingrain process are two core imperatives:

- After learning programs, follow up with enough effective reinforcement to ingrain new behavior patterns
- Involve participants’ direct managers (who are responsible for what happens in the workplace) in this reinforcement – before, during and after training

Train-to-Ingrain doesn’t have a rigid process model or formula. In most cases there are multiple options, different ways to create a strategy that will work best for your organization. To create a customized Train-to-Ingrain approach to learning and development, your organization will need to evaluate and fine-tune each of these critical areas.

- **COMMITMENT** – Support follow-up reinforcement
- **COACHING** – Prepare direct managers for their development role
- **FOLLOW-UP** – Integrate reinforcement programs with assessment and training programs
- **ACCOUNTABILITY** – Measure performance improvement and calculate ROI
- **TRAINING FOR TRANSFER** – Incorporate learning strategies that promote application and reinforcement of skills
- **LEARNING NETWORKS** – Coordinate support for reinforcement
- **FOCUS** – Identify training needs that will have a positive impact on business results

- **CULTURE** – Align the organization’s policies and practices to support performance improvement

### **Critical Area #1**

#### **COMMITMENT – Support Follow-up Reinforcement**

You may find that your organization is already doing much of what is recommended in this chapter. However, in most cases moving forward will mean making changes. Some managers may resist these changes, because they’re comfortable with the status quo – even though the changes make sense and promise to increase profitability.

For example, it’s natural that some managers won’t want to be held accountable for what they perceive are additional leadership responsibilities, especially if these duties involve knowledge and skills they don’t have. Program participants may feel uneasy about being assessed before and after training, because this technique enables their direct managers to hold them accountable for changing their behavior patterns. Long-standing policies and procedures may have to be changed. Favorite training programs may be eliminated as irrelevant. New technologies will be acquired.

In short, optimizing the way your organization approaches training and development won’t be a trivial project. Train-to-Ingrain promises a great deal, but it requires commitment to get people to do a number of things differently. Without commitment at all levels of management, tough decisions won’t be made, initiatives will be abandoned and important changes will never move forward. The will to push past resistance simply won’t be there.

Despite the significant benefits, rewards and results that come with reinforcing learning in the workplace, resistance could come in a variety of forms. Top-level executives may operate several layers of management removed from training and development programs. They may so preoccupied with shareholder, strategic, legal, acquisition or succession issues that they are faced with many priorities other than changing the way development programs are managed. If HR staff haven’t been required to put a high priority on improving performance, their programs may rarely achieve learning transfer and they may be wary of initiatives involving measurement and accountability.

The requisite level of commitment usually builds because top executives have compelling business reasons for getting behind the changes. In the case of Train-

to-Ingrain, the business case is simple: like any major investment in infrastructure, *training and development is expensive, and executives should expect measurable results*. Key executives who have ownership interest or profit-and-loss responsibility will be especially interested in results. If programs fail to create lasting improvements in workplace performance – which is all too often the case – the investment is mostly wasted. The resulting financial losses are painful and unacceptable.

Commitment may also be sparked by a knowledgeable champion who owns responsibility for training and performance improvement, understands the issues and wants to do something about them. Using this guidebook and other resources, this influential person can educate other key executives and gain their commitment up front. The best technique is to remind decision-makers about the cost of programs and help them face the facts about results.

In their efforts to establish commitment, influential managers sometimes run into a wall of denial. Often an organization has lived with the pain of this kind of waste so long that it's perceived as normal. People rationalize that because world-class trainers present high-quality courses, some good has to be coming from these activities even though behavior doesn't appear to change. They conclude that maybe it's unreasonable to expect measurable improvements in performance. Maybe the improvements are too subtle to notice, or maybe they manifest themselves unpredictably in the future.

So over a period of time, executives and supervisors alike can get used to this status quo. Like the proverbial frog in a pot of imperceptibly warming water, people gradually become comfortable with a situation that eventually causes unendurable pain. Like dealing with an alcoholic family member, executives need to confront this mindset. Top-down commitment needs to be visible and demonstrative. Executives need to:

- Make sure that managers understand why a reinforcement-intensive approach is necessary and why the organization must take a new approach to performance improvement (Chapter 1).
- Communicate to managers that they are expected to function effectively as performance coaches for their direct reports. If needed, give them training to prepare them for this role (Critical Area #2, p. 36 and Appendices C, H and J).
- Improve aspects of policies and practices when it's discovered that the system discourages on-the-job application of newly learned concepts and skills (Critical Area #8, p. 48 and Appendix G).

- Clarify expectations for improved performance and positive impacts on business results, to include measuring performance improvement, calculating ROI and defining accountability (Critical Area #4, p. 41 and Appendix F).
- Acquire compatible behavior-based programs that work together seamlessly to support assessment, training and reinforcement (Appendices I and K).

Quite clearly, the failure to get top management involved can doom an organization's prospects. Initially, getting managers on board can be a significant challenge. A traditional mindset among managers is the notion that employee development isn't their job. They rationalize that the organization pays the salaries of learning professionals to take care of this. In addition, the trainers themselves may not immediately warm up to the idea of measuring the results of their programs and being held accountable. Other managers may object to the costs of putting new systems in place. Still others won't understand the problem.



Executives have several options for getting their message across:

- Meetings and briefings
- Presentations by experts
- Repeating the message in a variety of media: email, web, video, newsletters, and memoranda
- Workshops to involve managers in customizing your organization's approach to Train-to-Ingrain and creating a plan for implementation
- Detailed expectations incorporated into managers' job descriptions and performance reviews
- Personal appearances in courses to emphasize importance
- Setting an example by modeling the desired skills

In the end, your quest to change behavior and improve business results will be a matter of cause and effect – the inevitable consequences of your organization's action or inaction. If things don't change much, the pain will stay the pretty much same. You've experienced this frustration before. That's why you're reading this guidebook.

Assuming that management is on board and that you have made a good beginning with measurable results, how can you build on this foundation? What should your strategy for making permanent improvements in performance include? Given what you're doing now, what actions should your organization take? The sections below describe the most effective options for Critical Areas #2 through #8.

## Critical Area #2

### **COACHING – Prepare Direct Managers for Their Development Role**

Train-to-Ingrain changes the way training and performance improvement programs are perceived and delivered. Traditionally, learning programs are thought of as interventions, solutions or activities – specific programs designed to address specific performance shortfalls. In the best case, these events are based on one of the traditional instructional design models in order to address an actual need for training. In the worst case, the decision to present them is heavily influenced by marketing, someone's opinion, a need to save money, or internal politics.

The Train-to-Ingrain perspective is dramatically different. It views performance improvement as *an ongoing process*, in which the three key partners of the Learning Triangle – trainers, participants and participants' managers – are involved in employee development as *an aspect of everyday work*. Assessment, training and reinforcement programs are integrated to support coaching, ongoing learning, follow-up feedback and assessment, and accountability.



The notion that staff development should be the responsibility of the training department is an erroneous mindset. In reality, *what direct managers do after training influences behavior change far more than what trainers do in the classroom*. This fact is not intended to devalue the vital role of trainers. But trainers don't own the system, and they don't run the organization. They have some influence; but they have practically no control over what happens in the workplace, where new skills must be diligently applied in order to be ingrained.

Once program participants leave the classroom, trainers can no longer significantly influence their development. Only the learner's direct manager is in

a position to give enough support, oversight, encouragement, feedback, coaching and reinforcement over the long term to change behavior. How well the manager carries out this role makes or breaks the transfer of new knowledge into permanent improvements in workplace performance.

To be an effective partner in the Learning Triangle, direct managers have a responsibility to:

- Communicate with trainers to understand and support assessment, learning and reinforcement programs
- Prepare to function effectively as a performance coach for direct reports; if needed, request refresher training (Appendices C, H and J)
- Meet with direct reports before each assessment, training or reinforcement initiative to clarify expectations and help them set goals
- Create opportunities for direct reports to gain experience using newly acquired skills
- Become familiar with the training and attend sessions to refresh familiarity in order to set an example for the skills expected of direct reports
- When possible, observe the work of direct reports, paying special attention to aspects of performance they're trying to improve
- Give timely one-on-one feedback and encouragement, and help direct reports learn from workplace experiences, whether successes or shortfalls

Executives can overcome the reluctance of direct managers to fulfill this role by telling them what's expected of them.

The first step is to make the role to coach and develop their direct reports a requirement – a formal aspect of their responsibilities. These and other expectations (see Appendix C) can be incorporated into manager competencies, job descriptions, performance review expectations, roles and functions manuals and other administrative documents. As a minimum, Appendix C can be copied and given to managers, covered by a clearly stated directive from upper management.

Coaching to improve the performance of team members is a reasonable, even traditional leadership role for managers. But many managers feel they aren't prepared for it. If your managers haven't previously been expected to take responsibility for the day-to-day development of subordinates, they may lack confidence. Because their current behavior patterns are the product of decades of

reinforcement, they'll need a Train-to-Ingrain performance improvement process in the area of coaching, including assessment, training and reinforcement. Ideally, the managers' managers will be competent to coach them. Otherwise, they may need to improve their own coaching skills.

As described in Chapter 2, Vital Learning has produced a reinforcement-based course called "Developing and Coaching Others" (Appendix J), which was designed to meet this need. If desired, staff trainers can facilitate the course in a convenient half-day format. Experienced managers will benefit from a fresh perspective on the physical realities of changing behavior and improving performance. Attendees receive tools to help them support the development of their team members. And nearly every manager needs practice in facilitating "learning moments" – one-on-one coaching of subordinates to learn from success and shortfall experiences.

A 15-item assessment called "Developing and Coaching Others," based on the objectives of the course, is available in the 20/20 Insight Survey Library (Appendix H). This survey should be administered several weeks before training and again several months afterward. Doing this helps participants understand what's expected and helps them set goals related to the course before attending. Also, knowing that they will be assessed again later focuses their attention and increases their commitment to find ways to improve their coaching skills. Comparing the results of these multi-source feedback surveys enables you to hold them accountable.

A number of books are currently available as references for managers who need to learn more about coaching workplace performance. As a caution, not all the books you'll encounter are equally helpful to managers. For example, *The CCL Handbook for Coaching* (2006) is an academic treatment of the topic, written mainly for executive coaches. *The Complete Guide to Coaching at Work* (2005) was written for professional business coaches – not managers. *Coaching and Mentoring* (2004) has sections that address both topics, although the first five chapters contain useful guidance for managers.

I recommend John Whitmore's book, *Coaching for Performance* (2002), written specifically for managers and now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Influenced by Tim Gallwey's mental strategies for coaching and improving individual performance, it explains a non-directive approach to developing directing reports. Whitmore's treatment is completely compatible with Train-to-Ingrain, and it's an excellent supplement for the "Developing and Coaching Others" course.

### Critical Area #3

#### ***FOLLOW-UP – Integrate Reinforcement Programs with Assessment and Training Programs***

The Train-to-Ingrain concept draws on the recent work of several experts in learning transfer. Broad and Newstrom in *Transfer of Training* (2001) were the first to stress that trainers, managers and trainees need to cooperate in a partnership to make lasting improvements in performance. Their book outlines many actions these three people can take before, during and after training to contribute to learning transfer. In *The Six Disciplines of Breakthrough Learning* (2006), the authors refer to “Phase 3,” a term first introduced by Zenger, et al (2005): the follow-up actions that are needed after preparation (Phase I) and training (Phase 2). Brinkerhoff and Apling in *High Impact Learning* (2001) stress that performance improvement needs to be an ongoing process, not an event. Their main recommendation is to invest only training programs that will address shortfalls in business results.

The contribution of Train-to-Ingrain to this body of knowledge is to:

- Give a neuroscientific explanation of why so much reinforcement is needed to ingrain new skills, so that management will have credible reasons for giving their commitment
- Distill the most useful of these concepts into a practical method
- Expand the notion of “Phase 3” into an effective strategy for supporting reinforcement as an ongoing aspect of everyday work
- Focus on the essential role of the direct manager as the primary coach in this process
- Explain how to get started quickly while formulating a broader plan for incremental change going forward

When you think about how athletes ingrain their skills – coaching, ongoing development, follow-up feedback and accountability – it makes perfect sense that leadership and other workplace skills require the same kind of reinforcement.

To support this ongoing process, your organization will need assessment and training systems that are:

- Focused on the behaviors needed in the workplace
- Compatible and integrated with each other

- Designed to support coaching, ongoing learning, follow-up feedback and assessment, and accountability

While dozens of feedback and assessment systems are available, few are designed to support reinforcement. Because it can be easily customized to administer any behavior-based survey, 20/20 Insight GOLD can be quickly integrated with the behavioral objectives of any training program. It also features inexpensive permanent individual licenses, which means that learners can get feedback and repeat measurements as often as they need it at no extra cost, making it economical enough to be used for reinforcement.



Flexibility and customizability are important because the performance measurement system needs to be compatible with and integrated with the training program. In other words, the performance feedback survey needs to exactly describe the development program's desired behavioral outcomes. 20/20 Insight GOLD is a customizable feedback platform, so in-house administrators can quickly customize it to present the behavioral objectives of any training course.

A superb example of the integration of learning and assessment systems is the way many organizations have used 20/20 Insight in concert with the Vital Learning Leadership Curriculum. Both are behavior based, both fully support the requirements of an ongoing process of reinforcement, and both are fully integrated with each other.



If the requirement is to make permanent improvements in the performance of line leaders, it's hard to imagine a suite of assessment and training technologies that is more compatible with the Train-to-Ingrain process. They make it possible to integrate assessment, training and reinforcement as a unified program.

## Critical Area #4

### **ACCOUNTABILITY – Measure Performance Improvement and Calculate ROI**

Organizations invest heavily in training and development, so it's fair that executives want proof of results. The traditional concept for evaluating the impact of training is Donald L. Kirkpatrick's classic four-level model for evaluating training (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005), which recommends measuring four types of outcomes.

Level 1 focuses on *reaction* – participants' satisfaction with the program. End-of-course evaluations serve this purpose. Level 2 focuses on *knowledge* – concepts participants have learned. Trainers administer knowledge tests very much like the exams used in high school and college. While these evaluations can help trainers improve their programs, they fall short of meeting executives' needs for evidence of improved performance.

Level 3, however, focuses on *behavior – the extent to which participants actually use their new skills on the job*. Level 3 evaluations are significant because they address the transfer of training: whether employees are routinely performing the skills they learned in the classroom. While this kind of evaluation can demonstrate whether a program has done its job, most organizations haven't settled on a simple, economical way to do it.

Fortunately, the feedback assessments used in a typical Train-to-Ingrain process are perhaps the most effective ever devised for measuring improvements in on-the-job performance. The procedure is simple (Appendix F). First, set up a multi-source feedback survey with questions that describe the behaviors taught in training. Administer the survey before training, letting participants know that the survey will be administered again after training. The pre-course diagnostic helps participants set quantified, behavior-based performance improvement goals. Knowing that follow-up measurements will be taken later peaks their motivation and attention going into training.

About six to nine months after training, administer the first follow-up assessment. Since both pre-course and follow-up post-course assessments are identical – derived from desired behavioral outcomes of the training – scores may be easily compared. Improved scores will confirm improved performance.

It's important not to measure post-program performance improvement too soon. It usually takes time for an individual to show improvement and mastery. In the best case, a learner earnestly tries to apply new skills immediately after training. Inevitably, these early attempts will be awkward, and results will be mixed. If surveys are conducted too soon, there's a good chance that performance scores could actually drop, introducing the chance that the measurements could be misinterpreted.



The ability to measure improvements in performance fulfills the need for follow-up feedback and accountability. The post-course assessments give learners quantitative and qualitative feedback about how they're doing as they try to improve their skills. Also, the assessment documents whether the individual has improved on-the-job performance. For ongoing measures of performance improvement, simply administer the assessment again at the twelve-month and eighteen-month marks.

Finally, Kirkpatrick's concept for Level 4 evaluation focuses on *business outcomes* – training's impact on the bottom line. Because these outcomes are also affected by so many other variables, most organizations have abandoned efforts to sort out how training has affected business results.

The best practical advice for calculating "business results ROI" is Jack Phillips' *Return on Investment in Training and Performance Improvement Programs* (1997). His coverage of ROI calculation techniques is comprehensive. While these may be the most effective methods for approximating the impact of training on business results, you should know that the data is nevertheless far from precise. And most of techniques are so complex that managers may not fully understand what is being reported. Furthermore, considerable time and expense are required. Your organization will have to supply data for specific business results. Often the difficulty is expressing these changes in dollars. Even more difficult is determining how much of this result may be attributed to training. Phillips explains how to research this properly, but it may be that no one in your organization is qualified to perform these tasks. It is certainly possible to invest more time and money in ROI research and calculation than in the training itself. Each organization must weigh capabilities, costs and benefits in order to judge how far it wants to go with Phillips' methods.

I recommend a much simpler approach – focusing on "individual performance ROI," the financial return you get from actual improvements in performance.

Calculating this is relatively simple. The key is to quantify the actual improvement in performance, then translate this benefit into dollars and determine whether this payoff is more than the cost. Conveniently, the data created by the performance improvement assessment technique described above can be used in a simple return-on-investment calculation.

Often, people on the ground have a better notion of reality than any statistical technique can estimate. Managers can confer and reach consensus on the relative impact of leadership on business results. For example, they may assume that in their organization, leadership effectiveness accounts for 50% of a team's productivity. They further assume that leadership ability accounts for half of a supervisor's effectiveness. Therefore, leadership ability is seen to account for 25% of this important results measure.

If a supervisor's assessment scores show an average improvement from 6.4 (before training) to 7.7 (several months afterwards), this equates to a 20% percent improvement. Since 25% of the supervisor's \$60,000 salary is \$15,000, the organization is now getting 20% more effectiveness, worth roughly \$3,750 – a benefit that is significantly greater than the cost of the individual's training, which was \$2,200. Philips' basic formula may be used:  $\text{Percent ROI} = 100 \times (\text{Benefits} - \text{Costs}) / \text{Costs}$ .  $\text{Percent ROI} = 100 \times (\$3,750 - \$2,200) / \$2,200 = 70\%$ .

Note that this calculation is based only on the first post-training measurement. If coaching, learning, feedback and accountability continue as a routine aspect of work, the results of subsequent assessments are likely to improve going forward. As new skills become ingrained, the benefits will continue to accrue year after year, while the up-front training costs remain the same.

Measuring performance improvement (Level 3) and calculating ROI (Level 4) produce hard evidence of whether programs are changing behavior. While the general mindset is to hold the training department accountable, it's important to remember that others share responsibility for these results:

- The learner, who persists during the lengthy and sometimes frustrating period of reinforcement
- The direct manager, who supervises and coaches the learner while providing opportunities to apply skills in an encouraging environment
- The trainers, who present behavior-based training that is optimized for skill transfer and who coordinate follow-up programs

- Senior executives, who establish expectations, commit resources, promote an approach that can change behavior, and remain patient while employees ingrain new behavior patterns

### **Critical Area #5**

#### ***TRAINING FOR TRANSFER – Incorporate Learning Strategies That Promote Application and Reinforcement of Skills***

Combining entertainment and knowledge learning makes for a more complete



experience in the classroom, and trainers are often gifted at delivering both. But neither of these crowd-pleasing elements of instruction effectively promote learning transfer. In addition, trainers often feel pressured to cover too much material. If you want learning to be retained, applied in the workplace and ingrained as permanent improvements in performance, instruction must be focused on introducing workplace behaviors that correct business shortfalls.

Thinking and doing are two different things, and the reinforcement of “doing” has to begin in the classroom. Over the years, learning professionals have identified a number of strategies for adult learning that promote retention and learning transfer. Consider how well your current programs incorporate these strategies:

- Create or obtain courses that address performance problems that impact on business results, making sure course objectives are focused on what participants will need to do on the job
- Focus course content on doing a few important things very well rather than covering all relevant topics, and break the learning into short segments
- Tell participants how the training focuses on improving business results
- Make sure participants understand what’s in it for them
- Vary practice situations and scenarios and make them as work-related as possible
- Relate new concepts and skills to what they already know
- Make it easy to record ideas, insights, questions and issues and give opportunities to discuss “lessons learned”

- Give immediate individual behavioral feedback, and make it easy for learners to give each other feedback
- Give participants structured time to visualize correct performance on the job
- Tell participants how to use job aids and other reinforcement resources
- Help participants set up “learning support groups”
- Help participants draft a realistic plan for on-the-job reinforcement

I encourage you to integrate as many of the above elements into your programs as possible (Appendix D). While applying and reinforcing skills until they are ingrained is something that needs to happen in the workplace, your programs must prepare participants for the challenges of ingraining new skills. You will find additional insights in *Transfer of Training* (Broad & Newstrom, 2001) and *The Six Disciplines of Breakthrough Learning* (Wick, et al, 2006).

Also, the trainer’s role is confined to the classroom. The next critical area describes how trainers can support learners and their direct managers after formal instruction is over.

## **Critical Area #6**

### **LEARNING NETWORKS – Coordinate Support for Reinforcement**

While only the direct manager can provide effective performance improvement coaching in the workplace, he or she has help in this role. For one thing, the trainer is the developer and coordinator of developmental programs. And while trainers may be uniquely qualified to get involved in follow-up reinforcement (time permitting), other interested individuals within an organization can give a developing employee advice, feedback, encouragement and coaching during the extended period of reinforcement:

- Program co-participants
- Peers
- Coworkers
- Subordinate team members
- Mentors

These adjunct coaches represent a network of support for the learner. If trainers simply encourage participants to create their own networks, results will vary

widely. A more effective course is to plan for and arrange support for these networks, tell participants and their bosses how to use these networks, and supervise their use. Here are some of the approaches used by successful organizations:

- Brown bag lunches, during which participants can review learning media, discuss on-the-job challenges and share learning experiences
- Webinars/teleconferences, in which trainers or guest speakers can discuss performance topics with participants
- Online forums, in which participants can interact with supportive individuals to ask questions, discuss issues, get feedback or share encouragement
- Action plan monitoring systems, whether an online service or a manual tickler system managed by trainers



Your organization will need to decide what to do about learning support: media, formats, frequency, participants, etc. I believe the stakes are too high to simply hope that participants will follow through on their own. The smart money is to ask the learners and their direct managers what they need, offer suggestions and find a way to make it happen.

### **Critical Area #7**

#### ***FOCUS – Identify Training Needs That Will Have a Positive Impact on Business Results***

Would a rational executive approve a major purchase if he or she knew it would have no impact whatsoever on profits? Training and development is a major corporate expense. Therefore, it's reasonable to ask: *Why would top management continue to invest in any assessment or training program that had no linkage to business results?*

The central theme of the book *High Impact Learning* (2001) is that if you want training to have a positive impact on business results, then invest only in training programs that correct performance shortfalls that you know negatively impact on business results.

While I agree that the processes recommended by Brinkerhoff and Apking are far more practical and effective than traditional ISD (instructional systems design) methodologies, the front-end analysis doesn't have to be complicated. I also recommend that you read chapter D1 of *The Six Disciplines of Breakthrough Learning* (2006), entitled "Define Outcomes in Business Terms," which describes a simplified approach to training design.

**Results Analysis.** I have simplified the recommendations of both books into a logical chain of seven questions, which seems the most direct way to establish a "direct line-of-sight" from the desired business results to the developmental program:

1. Which business results are not being met?
2. Which work units are supposed to contribute to these results?
3. Which unit performances are falling short of expectations?
4. Which areas of individual performance are contributing to this unit failure?
5. Which individual performers aren't measuring up in these areas?
6. Are the performance shortfalls due to deficiencies in knowledge or skill?
7. If so, what kind of developmental program would best correct these deficiencies?

These are relatively straightforward questions, and your organization may have a preferred method to obtain the answers. With regard to Question 6, Mager and Piper (1997) point out that individual performance shortfalls do not necessarily mean that employees need training. They may already know how to do what they're expected to do, but they may not have the requisite motivation or they may need more support from the organization to do their jobs.



It is worth noting that supervisors and managers are the key factor in a work group's ability to perform its vital business mission. Furthermore, leadership is an art as well as a science. So leaders at all levels have both strengths and weaknesses – areas in which they can increase their effectiveness. Therefore, targeted leadership development programs almost always have a line-of-sight relation to business results.

As noted earlier, if the area of individual performance involves leadership, sales, service, team or interpersonal skills, the most effective way to get valid, quantified measurement of individual performance is a multi-source feedback survey; and 20/20 Insight GOLD is the most flexible, economical resource for this purpose.

### **Critical Area #8**

#### ***CULTURE – Align the Organization's Policies and Practices to Support Performance Improvement***

A major factor in whether classroom learning leads to improved workplace performance is how well your organization's culture, policies and systems support participants' efforts to apply what they've learned. If aspects of the work environment discourage the application of new skills, there's little chance that learners will persist through the difficult period of reinforcement.

An organizational system that supports learning and performance improvement will provide the following:

- Direct managers who coach effectively, hold direct reports accountable, set a good example, help them learn from on-the-job experiences, and give feedback and encouragement
- Job responsibilities and performance goals/objectives that require participants to apply the skills
- Assignments or tasks that provide opportunities to apply the skills
- Performance reviews that evaluate how well they're using the skills
- Rewards and incentives that motivate them to use the skills
- Learning resources (programs, videos, books, etc.)
- Opportunities to learn from others, talking with co-participants and others about "lessons learned" from using the skills on the job
- Clearly stated expectations that skills will be used in the workplace
- Feedback surveys that measure improvements in performance

In order for managers to correct any shortfalls or barriers that exist in the workplace environment, they have to locate them. This isn't an easy task, because problem policies and practices serve an important purpose and usually have been in place a long time. Training professionals are especially attuned to deficiencies of this nature and should regularly report them to management.

Perhaps the easiest way to identify these issues is to get feedback from the participants themselves after they've tried to apply their skills on the job. The 20/20 Insight Survey Library has a survey called "Organizational Support for Performance Improvement" that gathers this kind of feedback (Appendix G). Ideally, you'll administer it to program participants 30-60 days after they return to the workplace. The survey solicits ratings and comments about the most important aspects of organizational support for performance improvement. You can study consolidated feedback and modify policies and practices accordingly.

### **The BOTTOM LINE of Chapter 3**

***You can customize an approach to Train-to-Ingrain that's compatible with your organization's culture. But the failure to optimize any of the eight critical areas will significantly degrade your efforts to have a positive impact on business results.***

## Chapter 4: THE DIRECT MANAGER'S CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE LEARNING TRIANGLE

### – A Narrative Illustration –

The core insight of the Train-to-Ingrain concept is that it takes quite a lot of reinforcement to establish a new behavior pattern. Since it's impossible to provide that much support, feedback, encouragement and coaching in the classroom, ingraining a new skill has to happen on the job. So if the participant's boss – who controls most of what happens on the job – fails to follow through with this reinforcement, there's little chance that what was learned in the classroom will ever transfer to improved performance in the workplace.

This is why Train-to-Ingrain views the direct manager's developmental responsibilities as a crucial element. The goal of Train-to-Ingrain is to change behavior – to improve individual performance in a lasting way. So learning is seen as a process – a series of learning events. In the best case, a course participant has the boss's guidance, support and encouragement well before training begins – and long after.

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate what happens, from the point of view of the key role players, when an organization effectively implements Train-to-Ingrain. To this end I tell the story of a fictional workplace called Oxana Technologies, a parts manufacturing company located in the Middle West. The narrative describes a Train-to-Ingrain scenario from the perspectives of the key role players. Our story begins with an account of how one of the middle managers got involved in Train-to-Ingrain.

### The Role of Direct Managers

**Executive briefing.** Early in September Jane Sanchez, head of plastics production at Oxana, received an email from her boss announcing that the company would begin offering learning units of the Vital Learning Leadership Curriculum to selected line managers. She attended a briefing on the particulars, where senior executives said that ineffective team leadership was implicated in quality and productivity problems.

To turn this around, the firm was committed to upgrading the leadership skills of first-line managers and ensuring that the managers of these first-line leaders share responsibility and accountability for improving their skills. Executives acknowledged that they didn't expect to achieve this goal overnight, but failure was not an option. This time the program would be conducted as a part of a new Train-to-Ingrain concept, which involves an integrated process of assessment, training and extensive follow-up reinforcement to achieve lasting changes in behavior.

Jane noticed that two things were distinctly different about the Train-to-Ingrain approach. First, post-course follow-up reinforcement would be a major part of the process. Also, she learned that supervising this phase of development would be her responsibility. In essence, she would act as her subordinates' coach for performance improvement. She, along with her subordinates and the training department, would coordinate the long-term effort in a partnership they referred to as the Learning Triangle.



Jane also learned that well before training began, her subordinates would receive a special 20/20 Insight 360-degree leadership skills diagnostic assessment to identify which areas of training would be most helpful. Portions of this assessment would be administered again during the months after training. Data from pre-course and post-course assessments would provide evidence of changed behavior, and everyone in the Learning Triangle would share responsibility and accountability.

**Coaching skills workshop.** While the involvement of bosses is crucial to any effort to change behavior and improve performance, in most organizations this is a new role for them. If they haven't been expected to develop their subordinates before, they may lack the confidence to carry out this responsibility now. The solution is usually a special course in coaching skills.

To prepare her for this role, Jane attended a workshop called "Developing and Coaching Others." The program explained how Train-to-Ingrain works. She learned that the failure to follow up in the workplace had caused previous training programs to fail. She saw that to actually change behavior, the

reinforcement effort would need to be significant, and she accepted that she would have to coach her subordinates for quite a while. The information about goal-setting meetings, encouragement, support and feedback laid out an effective plan of action for her to follow. The introduction to coaching skills was new to her, and she appreciated the opportunity to practice in the workshop.

**Preparation meeting.** She met with her section supervisors to inform them about the forthcoming leadership development program and the new Train-to-Ingrain approach. She emphasized that she expected them to apply their new skills in the workplace and that they would be assessed down the road to show evidence of improved performance. As she outlined the process, she talked about her role to reinforce what they learned. As she previewed the forthcoming 360-degree feedback diagnostic, she covered the following:

- The purpose of the assessment and its context in the Train-to-Ingrain process
- How the assessment would be administered
- What would be done with the report information

The week after the assessment, Jane received a packet from the training department containing a summary report of the strengths and weaknesses of her supervisors. The training department identified specific training modules to address the weak areas but left open the option of attending the entire series. The communication explained:

- Guidelines for coaching supervisors about assessment results
- Course content and course objectives
- When and where courses would be held
- How to sign up for courses
- Pre-course exercises

**Pre-course planning meeting.** While Jane was given one-page summaries of her direct reports' assessment scores, the supervisors themselves received detailed reports. Jane scheduled individual meetings, asking them to study their feedback and identify priority areas for improvement.

Her first meeting was with Russell, the shipping manager. They discussed both strengths and weaknesses highlighted by the assessment. They agreed that he would attend all the modules, giving special attention to communicating, coaching and delegating. They talked about how these areas affect his team's productivity.

Then Jane talked about the forthcoming training program and how it fit into the Train-to-Ingrain process. She gave Russell information about the courses. They discussed what would be done to cover his responsibilities in his absence, and she assured him that no one would contact him about work issues while he was away. They scheduled a post-course meeting to review what he learned, set improvement goals, and created a plan for reinforcing his new skills. She assured him she would be giving him regular feedback, coaching and encouragement. She reminded him of the post-course follow-up assessment and that management expected the data to show improvement. They agreed on specific goals to improve his scores.

**During training.** What happens in the classroom is the responsibility of trainers, but Jane understood that if Russell and the other supervisors were to actually improve the way they lead, she would need to do more than simply “release them to attend training” and wait anxiously for them to “get back to work.” She decided to support the program by doing the following:

- Show up on the first day of the course to personally endorse the purpose and importance of the training
- Audit the portions of the course that might help her set a good example
- Identify team members to take care of the attendees’ tasks and responsibilities
- Refrain from contacting the learners about job issues during training

After classroom instruction, trainers no longer have easy access to participants. The learners themselves have little control over workplace priorities, and it’s the rare individual who has the kind of self-awareness and motivation to persist in spite of a lack of support from the boss. So if participants are to receive ongoing feedback, continued learning, coaching and accountability, their direct managers have to play an active role.

**Pre-reinforcement planning meeting.** Jane met with Russell soon after he returned to work to talk about what he learned. They created a plan to reinforce and ingrain his new leadership skills during the months ahead. Jane made sure to:

- Talk about the timing and focus of follow-up assessment
- Explain the purpose and context of this phase of reinforcement
- Revisit goals to improve performance scores in priority areas
- Suggest reviewing online videos and course materials

- Outline opportunities to apply skills on the job
- Voice her expectation that he learn from on-the-job experiences
- Explain that they would have “learning moment” discussions
- Encourage him to attend trainer-facilitated “brown-bag” lunches
- Suggest discussing his reinforcement plan with his team, inviting their ongoing feedback
- Express her intention to give ongoing performance feedback



**During reinforcement.** Appreciating that it could take several months to fully ingrain the new skills, Jane saw that individual development and reinforcement had to become a routine aspect of work. Therefore, she committed to taking these actions on an ongoing basis:

- Give assignments that require using new skills on the job
- Set an example – use the skills taught in the course
- When possible, observe workplace performance
- Give verbal feedback when appropriate
- Provide encouragement
- Discuss “learning moments” with direct reports – help them integrate the lessons of experience while applying new skills
- Allow time for the direct report to meet with trainers, co-participants, mentors, and others who can contribute to learning
- Acquire and share related books, tapes and other learning resources
- Meet with direct reports to review the results of post-course feedback surveys

**Coaching moments.** Research says that people learn more on the job than they do in the classroom. But learning isn't an automatic byproduct of work. A lot can happen in a busy day, and people don't integrate the lessons of experience unless they reflect on these events afterward. And in a fast-paced environment, this rarely happens.

Jane learned in her coaching course that she could help her supervisors learn from experience by getting them to talk about their successes or frustrations. Whenever she became aware that something significant had happened in the workplace, she took her supervisors aside to discuss the incident. Her goal was to cause the individual to think about what happened by asking questions like these:

- What happened? Who did what? What was the sequence of events?
- Why did you handle it that way? What were you trying to accomplish? What helped or hindered? What led to the ultimate outcome?
- What were the consequences? What was the impact on others? What were the costs and benefits? Was anything resolved? Did the incident cause any problems?
- What did you learn from this? What would you do differently if you encountered a similar situation in the future?
- What are your next steps? What support do you need from me to be more successful?

Jane knew it would be a mistake to "give them the answers." The art of coaching isn't to instruct or lecture. The coaching course she attended taught her that it's far more effective to lead people to discover their own insights. During coaching moment discussions Jane knew she didn't need to follow the format in a rigid way; and she often sensed that her direct report was connecting the dots without her help.

**Analyzing feedback and resetting goals.** Six months after the training, the feedback assessment was administered again, using portions of the original survey. However, this time the purpose wasn't to diagnose strengths and weaknesses, but to check for evidence of improved performance.

With the new scores in hand, Jane met with Russell to discuss them. When they compared these scores with his earlier scores, they saw improvement in each area. As they talked about what had gone well during the past six months and what could have been more effective, he agreed that there was room for more



improvement. They made a few changes to their reinforcement plan, set specific goals for higher scores, and planned for another follow-up assessment six months later. After the meeting, Jane called Gary Houser, head of training, to let him know about the revised goals and to schedule the next assessment.

As you can see from this scenario, Jane Sanchez's role in Russell's development was absolutely essential. Can you imagine how dramatically different this scenario would have played out if Russell had a boss who was uninformed, indifferent and uninvolved? Sadly, this is the case in all too many organizations, with predictable results.

### **The Role of Trainers**

Of course, Jane wasn't operating alone. The training department was working hard behind the scenes to support what she and her supervisors were doing. To appreciate the contributions of Gary Houser and his staff, it's revealing to examine Train-to-Ingrain from their perspective.

Gary was the champion who got Train-to-Ingrain launched at Oxana. His efforts began the year before when he contacted management consultant Dr. Lawson Pryce about 360-degree feedback. Dr. Pryce asked Gary what he wanted the feedback project to accomplish, which led to a discussion about realistic ways to improve individual performance. The consultant explained why it takes a lot of reinforcement to change behavior. As he described how Train-to-Ingrain works, Gary was impressed with the logic and practicality of the approach. Later he set up a briefing for top management.

In the briefing, Dr. Price said that while some supervisors might need training, it's important not to look at assessment or training programs as solutions, but rather as important events in an ongoing process of performance improvement. He encouraged them to think of employee development as a routine aspect of daily work. While assessment and training can get the skill-building process started, the learner's direct manager needs to be the primary coach in a never-ending effort to improve a subordinate's ability to perform. He explained that launching Train-to-Ingrain at Oxana Technologies would require eight critical actions.

**Launching Train-to-Ingrain.** Senior managers responded by giving Gary a green light. Tom Jandorf, the president of Oxana, told him that senior managers had concluded that the success of the company was being held back by the inability of their line managers to lead well. They felt that this shortcoming had influenced everything: safety, quality, productivity, customer satisfaction and sales. They saw Train-to-Ingrain as their best chance to actually improve the way the supervisors lead, and they were 100% behind it. He also said that in addition to full support he could expect full accountability. “We’ll do our part and I’ll make sure the middle managers are on board,” he said. “Get Dr. Pryce to help you put together a plan. Just let me know what you need.”

During the next several months Gary’s team successfully put the eight critical actions into motion. Tom and Gary agreed up front that while adopting the Train-to-Ingrain approach promised to get the results they needed, it meant permanently changing aspects of the way Oxana conducts training programs.

**Making a commitment to follow-up reinforcement.** The first step was to get all levels of management on board. Tom felt that they needed to get everyone’s attention right away, so he called an all-managers meeting to be held in a nearby conference facility. Gary set everything up, and Tom did the talking. He reviewed Oxana’s key performance indicators and made the case that line managers need to improve their ability to lead.



Tom asked all the line managers to stand up. He said each of them had the potential to be more effective leaders, and the Vital Learning Leadership Curriculum would be available to get them started. He told them their skill levels would be assessed before training and several months afterwards to gauge improvement. He acknowledged that the shortcomings of past programs had to do with the failure of Oxana to follow through with a serious reinforcement effort in the workplace. This time the company had a plan to support an extensive period of follow-up reinforcement.

Then Tom asked the line supervisors’ bosses to stand up, and he told them it would be their job to take charge of follow-up reinforcement. In effect, they would be the primary performance coaches for their subordinates, responsible for their ongoing development as supervisors. He asked how many of them felt

confident about doing a good job of this, and about half of them raised their hands. He assured them a special course on coaching skills would be available.

When Tom asked the training staff to stand up, he told them that they would be responsible for setting up and coordinating Train-to-Ingrain in Oxana; and he outlined the eight critical actions. In short, they would create Learning Triangles throughout the organization and establish a system for supporting ongoing reinforcement.

The president concluded the meeting with this statement: “Our future business success depends on whether you folks can lead our employees to achieve the goals of our business. We’re serious about supporting this. We’re going to make it work.”

With the visible commitment of top management, Gary and his team spent the next few months preparing the critical areas that would support reinforcement-based performance improvement.

**Preparing direct managers for their development role.** To give middle managers an assessment of their coaching skills, the training department used 20/20 Insight GOLD to administer an individual feedback survey designed to match the workshop objectives. Afterwards, they announced that half-day courses on coaching skills would be conducted, and that top executives had signed up as a group to attend the first course. All managers were asked to attend one of the sessions during the next three months. In addition, trainers also made available these courses from the Vital Learning Leadership Curriculum:

- “Essential Skills of Leadership”
- “Essential Skills of Communication”
- “Providing Performance Feedback”

Trainers were asked to establish a permanent relationship between themselves and the direct managers by taking the following actions:

- Form partnerships with managers to keep each other informed about the performance improvement process
- Evaluate how prepared the managers are to function effectively as performance coaches
- Advise direct managers about their role in the Learning Triangle (Appendix C)

- Give direct managers and learners advance information about forthcoming programs
- Keep participants and their bosses “in the loop”
- Arrange for managers to take the course before their subordinates do (as a minimum they should review the course workbook and online content)

**Aligning the organization’s policies and practices.** Using 20/20 Insight, Oxana administered a special survey focused on how well the organization’s culture supports individual performance improvement. Executives learned about seventeen aspects of the Oxana system that presented possible barriers to individual performance improvement. They called for a special meeting with key managers to work out solutions to these problems. New policies and practices were put in place, and they ordered the survey to be conducted again the following year to assess the effect of the changes.

**Integrating assessment, training and reinforcement programs.** Gary knew he had to organize post-training support for reinforcement well in advance of the training itself. His goal was to maintain communication with learners and their direct managers throughout the reinforcement period. He acquired the 20/20 Insight GOLD assessment system and Vital Learning’s Leadership Curriculum, because they were both behavior-based, already integrated with each other, and designed to support an extended period of reinforcement.

Gary set up a plan to use the feedback assessments to measure skill levels before training and repeat the assessment after training. Because it was so easy to customize, 20/20 Insight also supported virtually any ongoing feedback the participants would request during reinforcement. The training itself included resources such as practice exercises, references, job aids and behavior model videos that support follow-up reinforcement activities.

**Identifying and conducting training that will have a positive impact on business results.** The training staff knew they had to define the linkage between business results, workplace performance shortfalls, individual skill deficiencies and training objectives. The consensus among managers at all levels was that inadequate leadership was definitely influencing business results. If they could improve the way line managers lead, improvements in business results would follow. The 20/20 Insight assessment results would identify skill deficiencies, which in turn would allow them to target courses and content.

**Incorporating training strategies that promote learning transfer.** Gary decided to outsource training services, using Dr. Pryce and his associates. Dr. Pryce assured him that the Leadership Curriculum could be presented for maximum learning transfer. To ensure a successful process, he recommended the following activities before, during and after training:

- Assign pre-course exercises
- Break learning into short segments focused on behavior-based objectives
- Early in the course, brainstorm with participants to identify workplace challenges and refer to these scenarios during course activities
- Ask learners to maintain a list of post-course application issues: questions, possible problems and resources needed to put skills into practice
- Devote most of the classroom time to realistic work skill practice
- Give immediate and clear feedback during practice exercises
- Encourage learners to give each other feedback
- Give participants job aids related to major skill areas
- Give participants structured exercises to reflect on what they're learning and how they plan to use their new skills on the job
- Make time for participants to discuss how they plan to use their new skills
- Set up trainer-facilitated "brown bag" discussion lunches so that participants can share learning experiences after training
- Preview support for post-course follow-up reinforcement: online course content and videos, workbooks, job aids, feedback assessments, learning support groups and direct manager coaching
- Help learners develop realistic action plans to apply skills after the course
- Recognize and publicize course completion

**Setting up learning support networks.** To complement the efforts of direct managers to coach participants in the workplace, Gary organized a system for peer coaching. Each participant would select up to ten people from among team members, co-participants, high performers and mentors who would agree to give advice, feedback and encouragement. He found an online forum service to facilitate communication among them.

**Measuring performance improvement and calculating ROI.** Pre-course leadership assessments would be repeated at the six- and twelve-month milestones after training. The post-course assessments would be limited to the skill areas addressed in training. Improved scores would give evidence of

improved performance. Everyone would be aware that all levels of management would evaluate this information and that everyone – trainers, learners and their bosses – would share responsibility for the outcome.

Senior leaders made clear their belief that leadership ability was a significant factor in achieving their business goals, but that it wasn't the only factor. Other variables, such as incentives, facilities, resources, marketing and product innovation, influenced the bottom line, too. Consequently, they decided it would be wise not to put all their eggs in the training basket. The Train-to-Ingrain process had caused executives to reexamine all these areas, and numerous improvements were made. Thus, the strategy to turn the company around was a systems effort, and they expected that the improvements would have a cumulative effect.

They decided to track five kinds of business results over a period of a year. If upturns in these results closely followed all these programs, they would have the evidence they needed that the total effort was a success. Six months after the leadership programs, results data were encouraging. The improved numbers continued to track upward during the months that followed.

In addition, executives wanted more specific ROI data related to line managers' leadership abilities. Gary met with representative managers, and they agreed that leadership ability was a 50% contributing factor to team performance. The average salary and benefits of their line managers was \$68,000, and the average total program cost per participant came to \$1,900. After six months, the average increase in performance, using the repeat 20/20 Insight assessments, went from 6.4 to 7.7, or an improvement of approximately 20%. They calculated that they were getting an annual average team performance benefit worth 20% of half of \$68,000, or \$6,800. The net return on investment would be this \$6,800 benefit minus the \$1,900 total cost divided by the total cost, times 100, or a first-year ROI conservatively estimated at 257%.

### **The Role of Learners**

At first, Russell was skeptical about the new leadership development program. He had attended other programs in the past, but none of them made much of a difference. Usually he learned some interesting things, but no one expected him to put any of it into action. In the end, it was business as usual.

This time the program seemed different. The president had a big meeting about it. And before the course began, his boss, Jane Sanchez, met with him to talk about why he was going and what would be expected of him. And perhaps more important, he'd be held accountable for improving the way he leads. "You're a good supervisor," she said, "but we need to get a baseline measurement of the way you lead now and then again several months from now. We're going to hold you accountable for improved scores."

The assessment really got his attention. He scored higher in some areas than in others. The lower scores had him concerned. Jane met with him to talk about his strengths as a manager and the areas that needed improvement. He realized that the next assessment would tell the story. There would be nowhere to hide. They identified three top priority areas for improvement and agreed to specific goals to improve his scores.

"You're going to have to pull your weight," she said. "Nobody can make you learn. I believe what they say is true. It isn't easy to change behavior. You'll need to keep after it for the long haul." She smiled. "We're in this together, Russell. The only way I can look good is if you look good. Starting right now, I'm going to do everything I can to help you improve your scores." He decided to make a dedicated effort. He asked her if he could attend all the course offerings, and she agreed. She surprised him when she said that she'd be taking some of the courses herself.

He attended twelve half-day sessions over a period of three months. Each course had a pre-course exercise related to his work team. He was surprised how practical the instruction was. The sessions were focused mostly on leadership action – how to interact with employees more effectively. He felt especially focused in the three courses that related to his performance improvement goals. He volunteered for every practice session. He sensed that he was gaining confidence.

At the end of each unit, the trainers helped the participants create realistic follow-up plans. Russell and his co-participants identified specific opportunities to apply the new skills. The trainers helped them make a list of people for their "support group." They told the participants about lunch-time refresher training meetings, and coached them about how to ask for feedback and how to accept it graciously.

Russell knew that his success would depend on how well he learned from his on-the-job experiences. Jane might encourage him, but most of the time she

wouldn't be there to observe him. The trainers had told him that if he didn't take time to reflect on what happens in the workplace, he would lose valuable lessons forever. They encouraged him to ask himself this series of questions:

- **What happened?** Who did what? What was the sequence of events?
- **Why did it happen that way?** Cause and effect? Your motives? What helped or hindered?
- **What were the consequences?** Impact on people? Benefits? Costs? Problems? Resolutions?
- **What did you learn from this?** What would you do if you encountered a similar situation in the future?
- **What are your next steps?** What support do you need to be more successful?

All the participants were shown how to keep a "learner's logbook" with worksheets for recording learning experiences based on their successes and failures. He was told that the toughest and the most important part of the training would begin after the course was over. It would take months for him to ingrain what he learned into his routine behavior, and he wouldn't be expected to do it without help. He, his boss and the trainers would cooperate in an ongoing effort to develop his skills. As they discussed what would happen after the course, Russell took these notes:



- Accept that it's my responsibility to follow through and ingrain the skill
- Be realistic about how frustrating it will be at first—I'll make mistakes
- Meet with Jane and my team to tell them about the course and my plan to reinforce what I've learned
- Ask Jane for opportunities to use my new skills on the job
- Frequently go online to check out the behavior model videos and course content
- Pay attention to how Jane operates, and observe other good role models
- If I go back to my old ways, talk to Jane to reset my plan

- Ask for performance feedback – thank people for it and change my behavior
- When I have successes or frustration, analyze what happened to learn from it
- Appreciate Jane’s efforts to coach me
- Stay in touch with my trainers, course participants and mentors – don’t be afraid to ask for advice
- Meet with Jane and team members to review the results of feedback surveys
- Graciously accept any encouragement that comes my way

### **The Role of Senior Managers**

In the end, Oxana’s leadership development program was a big success. A year later, they had plenty of data that line managers were leading much more effectively. And business indicators had bounced back. Top managers gave the credit to the Train-to-Ingrain approach to performance improvement, which they now saw as mostly common sense. They were now conducting all their training using these fundamentals.

The executives deserved much of the credit. To get the ball rolling, there were certain things that only they had the power to do. If they wanted positive impacts on business results and a maximum return on their investment, they knew they had to:

- Express their commitment to a reinforcement-based development process in a variety of ways over time
- State their expectations for achieving specific performance improvement goals and specific impacts on business results
- Direct the involvement of direct managers in the Learning Triangle
- Empower training staff to implement the eight critical actions to customize and launch Train-to-Ingrain
- Review policies and practices to ensure that they support performance improvement objectives

It turned out that the most important contribution of senior leaders was to motivate and hold direct managers accountable for coaching their team members effectively – before, during and after training. This was a big change at Oxana. The managers had to rethink what was involved in developing their first-line

managers. They had to prepare themselves for what they perceived as an expansion of their responsibilities. None of this would have happened if executives hadn't emphasized its importance.

**The BOTTOM LINE of Chapter 4**

***To achieve the changes you want in workplace behavior, the learners' direct managers need to be actively involved with trainers and learners during assessment, training and reinforcement. It will be virtually impossible to make lasting improvements in individual performance without the involvement of direct managers.***

## CONCLUSION

If you have read this far, it should be no mystery to you why most training programs don't achieve lasting improvements in performance. The simple fact is, it's hard to change an employee's work habits – for well-documented neurological reasons.

The good news is that you *can* implement developmental programs that actually change the way people do their jobs – permanently – and have a positive impact on your bottom line.

However, there's no easy way to accomplish it – no miracle cure, no magic formula, no quick fix, no magic bullet. You'll need to do something to optimize *all* the critical areas outlined in this guidebook. You need this kind of systems strategy because if any element within your organization runs counter to the goals of improving performance, the developing employee will be discouraged from persisting the many months that it will take to ingrain new skills.

Further, *managers at all levels will need to fully commit to the need for follow-up reinforcement* – a rare situation among organizations today. Reinforcement – ongoing feedback, continued learning, coaching and accountability – is the key to changing behavior.

For this reason, Train-to-Ingain can't be a project of the Training/Learning Department. The new approach has to be championed by top management until managers at all levels acknowledge ownership. Everyone will need to stop thinking of training as an event and accept that improving the way people work must be a routine aspect of work itself.

They'll need to embrace the idea that what is learned in the classroom has to be applied and reinforced in the workplace for months, or it won't become ingrained behavior. *Managers will have to accept what they may see as an expansion of their leadership responsibilities – their role to coach and develop their direct reports.* You may have to acquire some new technologies and learn new ways to apply them. The bottom line is that your organization will have to expand its learning support infrastructure to achieve lasting changes in behavior.

Once you transform the way you approach learning and development, then you can integrate a wide variety of assessment, training and reinforcement programs. Assessments will help you get the right people into the right programs with the purpose of correcting individual performance shortfalls that have had an adverse impact on business results. *The key is to set up assessments that reflect the behavioral objectives of the training. Then conduct both a benchmark assessment before the program and at least one follow-up assessment several months afterward.* This practice will help you focus the minds and motivations of participants, and it will allow you to measure how much individual performance has improved.

Direct managers – not trainers – will be the key players in this new approach to performance improvement. Individual performers can't coach themselves. And they can't persist with reinforcing new skills if their boss isn't actively supporting their efforts. Along with this more realistic approach to learning will come patience with the process. Many months of steady reinforcement will be needed to ingrain new behavior patterns.

Most of what I suggest here doesn't have to cost a lot of money. Indeed, the point is to earn a healthy return on the significant investment you're already making. Train-to-Ingrain doesn't ask you to do a lot more; mostly it recommends doing what you're doing now differently and more effectively. The detailed recommendations of this guidebook have been summarized as references and tools in the appendices. Knowledgeable Train-to-Ingrain learning professionals are available to advise and assist, if necessary.

For decades, organizations have searched in vain for learning and development programs that actually change behavior. Now this Holy Grail is within your grasp.



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## Appendix A

### **ACTION CHECKLIST – Implementing Train-to-Ingrain Performance Improvement Processes**

Train-to-Ingrain is a reinforcement-intensive framework to ensure that performance improvement programs produce lasting changes in workplace behavior and positive impacts on business results.

#### **Get Started Quickly**

These three essential reinforcement-based actions will immediately assist the transfer of classroom learning to the workplace and launch the ongoing process of ingraining new skills.

- Acquire integrated assessment and training technologies that support ongoing skill reinforcement.**
- Involve the direct managers in the learning process.** Define their staff development responsibilities and hold them accountable.
- Measure performance improvement.** Assess skill areas before and after learning to establish developmental goals and accountability.

#### **Build on the Foundation**

Below is a summary of eight critical areas (described in Chapter 3) that organizations need to augment over the long term to establish the kind of learning support infrastructure that gets desired results.

- COMMITMENT – Support follow-up reinforcement.** Involve top executives to get consensus at all levels of management for a customized Train-to-Ingrain process. Assign responsibilities and acquire the resources to accomplish the other seven critical actions.
- COACHING – Prepare direct managers for their development role.** Engage, train and support participants' bosses so they can coach direct reports effectively as participants reinforce new skills on the job.
- FOLLOW-UP – Integrate reinforcement programs with assessment and training programs.** Acquire customizable, behavior-based resources that can be used together seamlessly to support all phases of performance improvement.
- ACCOUNTABILITY – Measure performance improvement and calculate ROI.** To assure management's continued support of programs that actually change workplace behavior, conduct baseline pre-program

- and repeat post-program assessments to measure performance improvement, calculate ROI, and hold the key players accountable.
- ❑ **TRAINING FOR TRANSFER** - Incorporate learning strategies that promote application and reinforcement of skills. During training, employ learning methods that prepare participants for the long haul of reinforcing and ingraining skills after training.
  - ❑ **LEARNING NETWORKS** - Coordinate support for reinforcement. Organize lines of communication between learners and people who can share their experience, feedback and encouragement while skills are being ingrained.
  - ❑ **FOCUS** - Identify training needs that will have a positive impact on business results. (1) Identify individual performance problems that negatively affect business results, (2) Determine if skill deficiencies are causing these problems, and (3) Conduct training designed to correct these deficiencies.
  - ❑ **CULTURE** - Align the organization's policies and practices to support performance improvement. Remove roadblocks and disincentives. Identify and modify specific aspects of "the system" that make it difficult for participants to use their new skills.

## **Appendix B**

### **ACTION CHECKLIST – Model Train-to-Ingrain Performance Improvement Process**

#### **BEFORE training: ASSESSMENT and related actions...**

- Trainers acquire (or design), review and update courses to ensure they incorporate learning strategies that promote retention and learning transfer
- Trainers send managers and participants information about pre-course individual diagnostic surveys (using 360-degree feedback to assess skill areas that are otherwise hard to measure)
- Direct managers meet with direct reports to discuss forthcoming diagnostic survey: what, why, who, when, how
- Trainers administer pre-course individual diagnostic surveys and send confidential reports to participant (complete feedback) and direct manager (summary)
- Trainers distribute pre-course learning materials to participants and course information to participants' direct managers, including performance improvement and business results objectives, course content and schedule
- Direct managers meet with direct reports to discuss forthcoming training program: diagnostic scores, developmental priorities, relevance to workplace shortfalls and impact on business results, course content, boss's role, arrangements to cover responsibilities, expectations, post-course reinforcement and assessment activities
- Program participants complete pre-course assignments, focusing on personal learning and performance improvement goals
- Participants' managers review, audit or attend the course to prepare for setting a positive example

#### **DURING training...**

- Direct managers take care of the participants' responsibilities and protect the participant from work-related issues
- Trainers facilitate programs, implementing training strategies that promote retention and learning transfer
- Trainers brief participants on follow-up learning resources and help them set up learning support networks

- ❑ Participants focus on priority goals for improving performance, participate in skill-building exercises and make plans for follow-up application and reinforcement

### **AFTER training: REINFORCEMENT and related actions...**

- ❑ Direct managers meet with participants to discuss the course experience and plan for application and reinforcement of new skills goals
- ❑ Participants meet with team members to review the course objectives and content, major lessons learned and plans for follow-up reinforcement and to request ongoing feedback and support
- ❑ Trainers publicize and recognize successful course completion
- ❑ Trainers make online behavior modeling video and other learning resources available to participants
- ❑ Managers set an example for desired behavior
- ❑ Managers provide projects, assignments and other opportunities to apply newly learned skills
- ❑ Managers observe workplace performance and give feedback and encouragement, as appropriate
- ❑ Thirty to 60 days after the program, participants complete a survey about the organization's support for performance improvement
- ❑ Managers discuss successes and frustrations with direct reports, helping them learn from work experiences
- ❑ Several months after the program, trainers administer a repeat post-course individual skills assessment and send results to participant (complete feedback) and participant's manager (summary)
- ❑ Managers meet with direct reports to analyze the results of post-course feedback assessment, update performance improvement goals and adjust plan for follow-up reinforcement
- ❑ Participants stay in contact with trainers, course participants and mentors, who share experiences, insights, feedback and encouragement
- ❑ Trainers host "brown-bag" learning lunches and other discussion groups
- ❑ Trainers administer brief feedback projects when participants want feedback from team members
- ❑ Managers at all levels exercise patience as they await evidence of improved performance and positive impacts on business results
- ❑ Trainers assist in calculating return on investment

## Appendix C

### **ACTION CHECKLIST – Development Role of Direct Managers**

- Accept responsibility for coaching and developing direct reports in the workplace
- Communicate with trainers about direct report's performance, participation in developmental programs and reinforcement activities
- Attend, audit or review the direct report's course so that you can set an example for the skills to be learned
- Study course materials provided by trainers
- Meet with direct report to ensure he or she is prepared for assessment and training programs
- Meet with direct report to evaluate performance assessment results and communicate expectations for performance improvement
- Make arrangements for team members to cover direct report's responsibilities during training
- During training, refrain from contacting direct report about work issues
- After training, meet with direct report to evaluate learning experiences, set performance improvement goals and plan for ongoing reinforcement
- Give assignments that require using new skills on the job
- Be a positive role model – use the skills effectively yourself
- Frequently observe workplace performance
- Give positive and constructive verbal feedback when appropriate
- Provide encouragement
- Discuss “learning moments” with direct reports – help them integrate the lessons of experience while applying new skills
- Allow time to meet with trainers, co-participants, mentors, and others who can contribute to learning
- Acquire and share related books, tapes and other learning resources
- Meet with direct reports to review the results of post-course feedback surveys and update plan for ongoing reinforcement

## Appendix D

### **ACTION CHECKLIST – Training Strategies for Retention and Learning Transfer**

- Create course objectives that are application-oriented – what participants will need to do on the job
- Design the course to focus on doing a few important things very well rather than covering all possible topics
- Structure the course so that the learning is broken into short segments
- Explain why the training is being conducted – the need for the organization to improve business results, evidence of related knowledge and skill deficiencies, and the impact of new skills on workplace performance and business results
- Make sure participants understand all the benefits of the learning – “what’s in it for them”
- Early in the course, brainstorm with participants to focus on workplace challenges and then refer to these scenarios during course activities
- During instruction, relate new concepts and skills to what they already know
- Provide forms and build in opportunities for learners to record ideas, insights, and post-course application issues – questions, possible problems and resources they’ll need to put skills into practice
- Provide frequent opportunities to discuss “lessons learned”
- Make practice exercises as realistic and work-related as possible
- Give them a variety of case studies and relevant articles
- Vary the practice exercises – challenge learners with different situations and scenarios
- Vary the membership of table groups, so participants are exposed to different perspectives
- Give immediate individual behavioral feedback during practice exercises
- Structure practice so that learners can give each other feedback
- Give participants structured time to visualize correct performance on the job
- Give participants job aids related to major skill areas – summary references that describe how-to steps

- ❑ Preview support for post-course follow-up reinforcement: reinforcement planning, online resources, workbooks, job aids, feedback assessments, learning support groups, direct manager coaching
- ❑ Help participants identify individuals for a “learning support group” – people who can give feedback, encouragement, advice or coaching after the course
- ❑ Make time for participants to discuss their concerns and plans for using their new skills
- ❑ Have participants draft a realistic plan or contract for using their new skills on the job; make copies – send to direct managers and several weeks after the course send to participants as a reminder

## **Appendix E**

### **ACTION CHECKLIST – The Coaching Moment**

The best practice a program participant can get is to apply newly learned skills in the workplace. This is how skill learning gets reinforced and ultimately ingrained. The value of coaching is that it doesn't leave learning to chance. It ensures that the right lessons are being learned.

“The Coaching Moment” is probably the most powerful coaching tool available to a manager. Its purpose is to help direct reports learn from their workplace experiences by getting them to talk about their successes or frustrations. Whenever a manager is aware that something significant has happened in the workplace, the technique is to take the direct report aside to explore what happened and what may be learned from it.

The technique is to get the direct report to discover the lesson, rather than lecturing or explaining the lesson. This may be accomplished by asking questions like the ones listed below, in roughly that sequence. This isn't a rigid checklist. The skillful manager will use it as a guide, letting the learner do most of the talking and nudging the thought process forward to its conclusion:

- What happened? Who did what? What was the sequence of events?
- Why did you handle it that way? What were you trying to accomplish? What helped or hindered? What led to the ultimate outcome?
- What were the consequences? What was the impact on others? What were the costs and benefits? Was anything resolved? Did the incident cause any problems?
- What did you learn from this? What would you do differently if you encountered a similar situation in the future?
- What are your next steps? What support do you need from me to be more successful?

A typical Learning Moment discussion may last only a few minutes...just long enough to make sure the direct report has “connected the dots.” It isn't easy to change a pattern of behavior, so an encounter like this is an excellent opportunity to encourage the individual to keep trying.

## **Appendix F**

### **SURVEY – Measuring Performance Improvement**

The “Holy Grail” of training and development has always been to achieve *permanent, measurable improvements in performance that have a positive impact on the bottom line*. What’s needed is for performance improvement to become a routine aspect of work itself. Quite a bit of supervised application, feedback, encouragement and coaching is needed to ingrain a new pattern of behavior. This can only take place on the job.

Feedback is vital to the long-term reinforcement and ingraining of skills, because along the way both learners and their managers need to know how the skill development is progressing. To determine whether performance has improved, you have to measure it both before learning programs and several months afterwards. In the case of leadership, team interaction, sales, service, instruction and other areas that involve mostly interpersonal behavior, performance is characteristically hard to measure. The most effective way of getting quantitative measurements of these skills is 360-degree assessment. Administered before and after training, scores can be compared to measure how much improvement has taken place. Post-training surveys can be repeated periodically for a year or more after training. This keeps participants informed of progress and motivates them to persist.

#### **HOW TO SET UP THIS SURVEY IN 20/20 INSIGHT GOLD**

Using 20/20 Insight GOLD to measure performance improvement involves a minimum of two separate assessment projects. In each one, the course participants will receive feedback from the people who work closely with them. The first administration takes place shortly before the training program and presents items related to the skills that will be addressed in training. This assessment serves as a diagnostic, revealing strengths and priority areas for improvement. Trainers and managers can use the scores to determine which courses to offer the participants.

The second assessment occurs six to twelve months after training. This assessment is based on the first assessment and may contain the same items, or it may include only the areas the individual focused on in training. Pre-course and post-course results can be compared to gauge the improvement in performance since the person participated in the course.

The performance improvement measurements enable the organization to hold learners, managers and trainers accountable for the results of training programs. The information also gives evidence of the value and effectiveness of the programs, so that executives can decide whether to continue investing in these programs in the future. The measurements can be also used as benefit data in standard ROI calculations.

Set-up is similar to a typical individual feedback project, except that the items include behaviors to be addressed in training, and the project will be implemented at least twice.

**Subject.** The subjects are the course participants.

**Respondent relationship types.** The relationship types are the groups of people who have first-hand knowledge of the person's performance in the areas related to the course content – manager, coworker or peer, direct report and customer.

**Surveys.** The survey items used will be determined by the course content. 20/20 Insight's Survey Library contains hundreds of items related to individual performance, and these can be reviewed initially to determine if any are applicable. Your organization can also create customized items that tie directly to the course objectives.

**Open-ended questions.** Feedback in the form of open-ended comments can help the person focus his/her efforts during the training program.

- What do you think is this person's greatest strength in this area?
- What do you think this person needs to focus on most to improve in this area?

**Scales.** The Satisfaction scale works well for this application because respondents can indicate how satisfied they are with the person's current performance. If you'd like to use two scales in order to compare actual vs. desired performance, the "Frequency" and "Expected Frequency" scales can be used.

## Appendix G

### **SURVEY – Organizational Support for Performance Improvement**

Are your organization's policies and practices aligned with the goals of your performance improvement programs? To find out how well they support and encourage an employee's efforts to improve performance, learning program participants may be surveyed 30-60 days after they return to the workplace. The following survey, available in the 20/20 Insight Survey Library, is the easiest and most effective way to diagnose whether aspects of the system are supporting or frustrating attempts to apply new skills:

#### **How strongly do you agree with this statement?**

1. My JOB RESPONSIBILITIES require me to use the skills and concepts I learned in training.
2. My PERFORMANCE GOALS/OBJECTIVES require me to use the skills and concepts I learned in training.
3. I've been given ASSIGNMENTS OR TASKS with opportunities to apply the skills and concepts I learned in training.
4. My PERFORMANCE REVIEW evaluates how well I'm using the skills and concepts I learned in training.
5. The REWARDS AND INCENTIVES available to me motivate me to use the skills and concepts I learned in training.
6. ADDITIONAL LEARNING RESOURCES such as programs, videos and books are available to help me improve how I perform the skills and concepts I learned in training.
7. I have regular OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN FROM OTHERS, to talk with co-workers, program participants or mentors about "lessons learned" related to the skills and concepts I learned in training.
8. SENIOR MANAGEMENT has made it clear that I'm expected to use in the workplace the skills and concepts I learned in training.
9. I receive FEEDBACK FROM SURVEYS that measure how much I've improved the way I perform the skills and concepts I learned in training.
10. MY MANAGER sets a good example for using the skills and concepts I learned in training.
11. MY MANAGER has told me that I'll be held accountable for using the skills and concepts I learned in training.
12. MY MANAGER is actively involved in my ongoing learning and development related to the skills and concepts I learned in training.

13. The way MY MANAGER coaches me in the workplace encourages me to improve the way I perform the skills and concepts I learned in training.
14. My DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE makes it easy for me to apply the skills and concepts I learned in training.
15. My organization's POLICIES AND PRACTICES support my efforts to apply the skills and concepts I learned in training.
16. My ORGANIZATION gives me adequate support to help me improve the skills and concepts I learned in training.

## HOW TO SET UP THIS SURVEY IN 20/20 INSIGHT GOLD

**Subject.** Use the name of the organization, not an individual.

**Respondent relationship types.** The respondents for this survey will be the recent participants of learning and development programs (30-60 days after course completion). The relationship types you set up will be determined by the way your organization wants to analyze the data. Here are a few options:

- Employee level (vice president, manager, supervisor, employee, etc.)
- Employee position (technical specialist, designer, clerk, engineer, etc.)
- Department (Engineering, Accounting, Marketing, etc.)

**Surveys.** Use the 16-item survey, Post-Training Support.mdb - "Organizational Support for Performance Improvement." Review and revise to make the wording appropriate to your organization.

**Open-ended questions.** To get comments that may not have been elicited by the scaled items, consider including a few open-ended questions.

- Are any aspects of the organization's policies and practices discouraging you from improving your performance?
- What more could your manager do to support your efforts to improve your performance?

**Scales.** Use the "Agreement" scale with this question stem: "How strongly do you agree with this statement?"

**Other.** Modify one aspect of respondent feedback set-up. Click on "Customize" at the main screen for this project in WebResponse. Under Scaled Input Header, delete the default text ("Please rate...") and leave this field blank.

## Appendix H

### SURVEY – Managers' Performance Coaching Skills

Managers are responsible for coaching and developing their direct reports in the workplace. If the manager doesn't take an active supportive role, it may be impossible for an employee to follow through after training and ingrain newly learned skills. However, not all managers are confident in this role. If this is the case in your organization, the best solution is assessment, training and reinforcement in development responsibilities and coaching skills.

The survey "Developing and Coaching Others," which is based on the Vital Learning leadership development course of the same name (see Appendix J), is available in the 20/20 Insight Survey Library. It focuses on the following essential coaching behaviors:

#### **How strongly do you agree with this statement about your manager?**

1. Helps me set realistic goals to improve aspects of my performance.
2. Helps me create plans to get the most out of assessment, training and ongoing reinforcement.
3. Holds me accountable for improving my performance and achieving developmental goals.
4. Tells me what's expected of me.
5. Sets a positive example for the skills and work habits I'm trying to improve.
6. Gives me tasks that require me to apply new skills in the workplace.
7. Observes my performance on a regular basis.
8. Helps me think about and learn from my attempts to apply new skills.
9. When appropriate, shares tips and insights from experience.
10. Encourages me when I'm faced with difficulties.
11. Gives me frequent one-on-one feedback about how well I'm doing my job.
12. Discusses the results of formal feedback assessment to help me identify strengths and weaknesses.
13. Takes action to change things that make it hard for me to perform at my best.
14. Gives me time to participate in developmental programs.
15. Helps me obtain relevant books, articles, tapes and other instructional media

## HOW TO SET UP THIS SURVEY IN 20/20 INSIGHT GOLD

**Procedure.** Administer the assessment a few weeks before the course to allow the manager to analyze the feedback and identify priority areas for improvement. Then administer the assessment again several months after the course to measure improvement in the manager's performance as a coach.

**Subject.** Use the name of the manager who will be attending the course in coaching skills.

**Respondent relationship types.** The respondents for this survey will be the direct reports of the manager.

**Surveys.** Use the 15-item survey category called "Developing and Coaching Others" in the file named Module-Focused Behaviors.mdb, located in the folder called "Vital Learning Leadership Skills." Review and revise to make the wording appropriate to your organization.

**Open-ended questions.** To get comments that may not have been elicited by the scaled items, consider including an open-ended question such as: "What more could your manager do to support your efforts to improve your performance?"

**Scales.** Use the "Agreement" scale with this question stem: "How strongly do you agree with this statement about your manager?"

## Appendix I

### 20/20 Insight GOLD Assessment System

Several assessments and surveys have been described in this guidebook as essential elements of a reinforcement-intensive performance improvement process:

- Pre-course performance measurement
- Post-course performance measurement
- Ongoing feedback
- Survey of organizational support for performance improvement
- Assessment of coaching skills



The preferred assessment technology is 20/20 Insight GOLD, published by Performance Support Systems, Inc. What makes 20/20 Insight so useful in performance improvement is its flexibility. It lets you create or customize practically any kind of multi-source feedback survey – including 360-degree feedback projects, pre- and post-training competency surveys, ongoing individual feedback, team and organization climate

surveys, and customer satisfaction surveys. It will power any locally developed or customized survey.

It comes with an extensive library of surveys for supervision, management, executive leadership, customer service, customer satisfaction, sales, instruction, administrative performance, organizational climate, team development and individual skill development, and more. 20/20 Insight GOLD allows complete customization of any survey: items, categories, scales, narrative questions, respondent relationships, instructions, developmental recommendations and report formats. 20/20 Insight may be used in web-based or paper modes.

It's also the most economical 360-degree feedback system available. There are no ongoing maintenance costs, and quantity discounts are available for unlimited individual usage licenses, a major factor when considering the need for repeat assessments and feedback during the reinforcement phase. Purchase price includes:

- Software upgrades
- Technical support

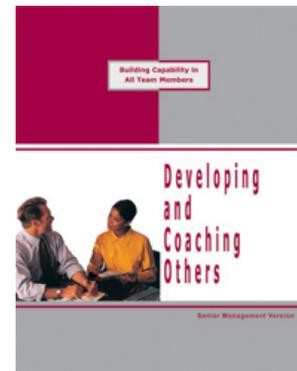
- Administrator training
- 20/20 PowerUser CD
- Onsite self-customization
- Unlimited report printing with respondent comments
- Individual and aggregate reports

## Appendix J

### COURSE – “Developing and Coaching Others”

Employees may be introduced to new skills in the classroom, but it typically takes extensive reinforcement on-the-job after a workshop to master new skills and make them a part of everyday behavior.

The quality of reinforcement that learners receive after training depends in large part on their bosses. When their direct managers are effectively involved... reinforcement happens. When managers give effective performance coaching... reinforcement happens. When managers arrange opportunities to apply the skill on-the-job... reinforcement happens. When they support ongoing learning and follow-up feedback and assessments ... reinforcement happens. Unfortunately, most managers are inexperienced or lack the skills to give this kind of high-quality reinforcement.



For this reason, Vital Learning Corporation created “Developing and Coaching Others,” a half-day skill-building workshop for managers. The program equips them with the skills and tools they’ll need to be effective performance coaches. The workshop helps managers understand what they need to do to and how to do it:

- Effectively help learners plan to get the most out of their assessments, training, and reinforcement
- Ensure direct reports are accountable for improving performance and achieving developmental goals
- Know how and when to best communicate what’s expected of direct reports
- Assign tasks that require application of new skills in the workplace
- Observe individual performance on a regular basis, if possible
- Help direct reports learn from attempts to apply new skills
- When appropriate, share tips and insights from experience
- Provide constructive encouragement when direct reports are faced with difficulties
- Effectively provide frequent one-on-one growth and development feedback

- Discuss the results of formal feedback assessment to identify strengths and weaknesses
- Remove barriers that make it hard to perform well
- Give time to participate in developmental programs
- Help obtain relevant books, articles, tapes and other instructional media

The course includes exercises and practice in guiding direct reports to make the most of “coaching moments,” an essential developmental skill. Managers also receive copies of the *Self-Development Toolkit* for direct reports and access to Vital Learning Leadership Curriculum resources, including online behavior model videos.

The above behavioral objectives are aligned with the 20/20 Insight GOLD leadership survey, “Developing and Coaching Others (see Appendix H). Ideally, the survey is administered before the course to prepare participants and administered again several months afterwards to gauge progress and hold managers accountable for improvement.

## Appendix K

### Vital Learning Leadership Curriculum



A common application of the Train-to-Ingrain performance improvement methodology involves a highly successful leadership development program, Leadership Curriculum, published by Vital Learning Corporation.

Fully integrated with the 20/20 Insight GOLD feedback assessment system, this award-winning line leadership development program helps participants address more effectively the recurring challenges that every team leader, supervisor or manager faces on a regular basis.

The comprehensive Leadership Curriculum features a highly practical behavior-based “how to” approach. Vital Learning's Leadership Curriculum is a multi-unit leadership development curriculum:

- Essential Skills of Leadership
- Essential Skills of Communication
- Developing Performance Goals & Standards
- Providing Performance Feedback
- Improving Work Habits
- Coaching Job Skills
- Resolving Conflicts
- Managing Complaints
- Effective Discipline
- Supporting Change
- Communicating Up
- Delegating
- Hiring Winning Talent
- Motivating Team Members

The Leadership Curriculum is available via classroom workshop, online, or a blended combination of classroom and online. The curriculum includes resources to help learners reinforce their skill development after the sessions end by applying the techniques on-the-job.

Additional units are available on critical challenges such as “Leading Successful Projects” (4 units), “Retaining Winning Talent” (2 units), “Solving Workplace Problems (1 unit) and “Developing and Coaching Others” (1 unit).

More solutions are in development on such difficult challenges as: “Integrity Matters,” “Using Financial Data,” and “Leading Effective Meetings.”

## **Appendix L**

### **Selected Bibliography**

*Well over a hundred books and articles were consulted during the research for this guidebook. This list includes only the references considered essential enough to be mentioned in the text.*

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## **DENNIS E. COATES, PH.D.**

Denny is CEO and co-founder of Performance Support Systems, in charge of research and development and strategic direction. He is the author of 20/20 Insight GOLD, an award-winning 360-degree feedback assessment system. Denny is also the author of MindFrames personality assessment system on [Initforlife.com](http://Initforlife.com).

A graduate of West Point, Denny has over 40 years' experience as a manager and leader. His military assignments focused on training and personnel management and included service in Viet Nam and Germany. He retired from the Army as a lieutenant colonel in 1987. He earned his Ph.D. at Duke University and has served on the faculties of the U.S. Military Academy, the Armed Forces Staff College, the College of William and Mary, and Thomas Nelson Community College. In addition, he was an adjunct lecturer at the Center for Creative Leadership for ten years. Hundreds of Fortune 1000 companies have benefited from his programs in assessment, performance, self-awareness, leadership and team development. He is the author of numerous articles, booklets, and manuals in the areas of personality, leadership, management, training, and creativity.

Denny lives in New Braunfels, Texas, with his wife, Kathleen, a free-lance writer. He devotes his free time to writing, gardening, fitness and SCUBA diving.