

Training budgets: how to get the best from your budgets

The economic slowdown means training and L&D budgets are under pressure. Richard Chappell argues that L&D managers must therefore prove the training they organise really does deliver.

As the person responsible for your organisation's training programmes, one of your key objectives will be ensuring your company gets the best results from its training investment. As such there are a couple of vital questions that need to be considered:

- Is the training each person receives going to make a significant contribution to improving their value to the organisation through increased efficiency?
- What processes can you put in place to measure any performance increases?

It's crucial that you get the answers to these questions before the training intervention starts, and before you choose your training provider, otherwise it might be too late. Following are some checks you can put in place to help you maximise your return on investment.

Feedback is paramount

Don't just rely on pass rates and qualitative feedback to measure training effectiveness as this isn't going to give you an accurate measurement. Work with a provider that has sound systems in place to provide you with post-course feedback.

We use a post-course survey three months after course completion, once delegates have had time in the workplace to implement what they learned. In many cases – depending of course on the type of training – you should be looking for a perceived productivity increase of no less than 30%.

Consider what measurements you'll put in place prior to instigating the training programme. If you were planning a training programme for a team of project managers, you could measure the project completion rates, and number of projects completed to time and on budget, pre- and post-training.

Key points

- Identify in advance the benefits or achievements you want to get from the training, work with your training provider to ensure these goals are built into the programme, are achieved, measured, and then applied in the workplace.
- Check that your training provider not only has a structured approach to providing course feedback but that they also share this information with you.
- Check that your provider reviews and updates courses regularly and intelligently, so your people are learning precisely what will help them do their job more effectively today, not yesterday.
- Look carefully at the training environment. Classrooms need to do more than look good. They need to facilitate the learning experience, exploiting technology and practical group activities to immerse the delegates in a simulated 'real world' environment.
- Ensure the instructors have current and ongoing experience of applying the subjects they teach. The best people to train your people are obviously those who still practise what they teach in the real world – so be wary of 'full-time trainers'.
- And, if your organisation operates on a global scale, it's essential to confirm that your training partner has the people and the infrastructure in place to deliver the results you need consistently in all the locations, across all skillsets.
- Finally, always ask a prospective training provider what steps they would take if you're not happy with the training they have provided. Your training programme should definitely be giving you a measurable return – and these few simple steps should help you ensure you are getting the very best possible out of the budget available.