

Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Evaluation

Assessing training effectiveness is critical. Donald Kirkpatrick developed a four-level model of evaluation (Figure 1).



Figure 1

- 1 - Reactions: Measures how participants have reacted to the training.
- 2 - Learning: Measures what participants have learned from the training.
- 3 - Behavior: Measures whether what was learned is being applied on the job.
- 4 - Results: Measures whether the application of training is achieving results.

Each successive level of evaluation builds upon the evaluations of the previous level. Each successive level of evaluation adds precision to the measure of effectiveness but requires more time consuming analysis and increased costs.

Level 1 Evaluation - Reactions

This level measures how participants in a training program react to the training. Every program should at least be evaluated at this level to answer questions regarding the learners' perceptions and improve training. This level gains knowledge about whether the participants liked the training and if it was relevant to their work. Negative reactions reduce the possibility of learning.

Evaluation tools:

- Program evaluation sheets
- Face-to-face interviews
- Participant comments throughout the training
- Ability of the course to maintain interest
- Amount and appropriateness of interactive exercises
- Ease of navigation in Web-based and computer-based training
- Participants' perceived value and transferability to the workplace

This type of evaluation is inexpensive and easy to administer using interaction with the participants, paper forms and online forms.

Level 2 Evaluation - Learning

Level 2 evaluations are conducted before training (pre-test) and after training (post-test) to assess the amount of learning that has occurred due to a training program (Figure 2).

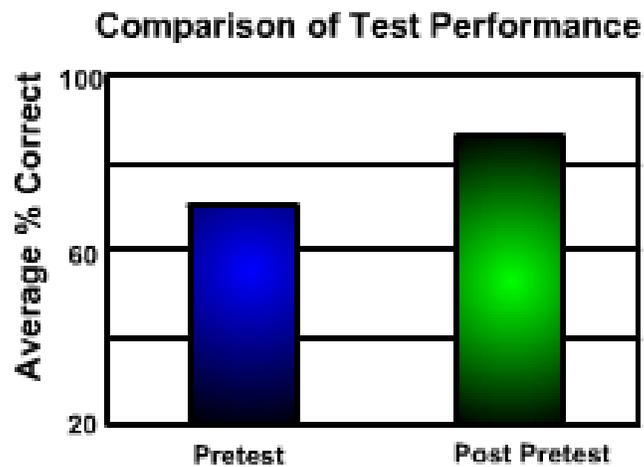


Figure 2 - Level 2 Evaluation Showing Results of Pretest and Post Test

Level 2 evaluations assess the extent learners have advanced in knowledge, skills or attitude. Level 2 evaluation methods range from self-assessment to team assessment to informal to formal assessment.

Evaluation tools:

- Individual pre- and post-training tests for comparisons
- Assessment of action based learning such as work-based projects and role-plays
- Observations and feedback by peers, managers and instructors

Level 3 Evaluation - Transfer

Evaluations at this level attempt to answer the question of whether the training has been transferred back to the job. This evaluation is typically performed three to six months after training. The evaluator would ask questions such as "Are the newly acquired knowledge, skills or attitude being used in the environment of the learner"? This evaluation represents the truest assessment of a program's effectiveness but is costly. It is often impossible to predict when changes in behavior will occur. Careful planning decisions are needed for this level of evaluation in terms of when to evaluate, how to evaluate and how often to evaluate.

Evaluation questions:

- Did the trainees put their learning into effect when back on the job?
- Were the relevant skills and knowledge used
- Was there noticeable and measurable change in the activity and performance of the trainees when back in their roles?
- Was the change in behavior and new level of knowledge sustained?
- Would the trainee be able to transfer their learning to another person?
- Is the trainee aware of their change in behavior, knowledge, skill level?
- Did the representative open each telephone customer dialog using his or her name and department?
- Was the representative able to describe to you and categorize the customer's objections as either misinformation or valid?
- Did the representative use the appropriate model answer in response to each objection?

- Did the representative close each sales call with a request for purchase?
- If the prospect did not make a purchase, did the representative end the call with specific future action steps?
- Did the representative complete call history records that include summaries of who, what, where, when, and why?

Evaluation tools:

- Individual pre- and post-training tests or surveys
- Face-to-face interviews
- Observations and feedback from others
- Focus groups to gather information and share knowledge

Level 4 Evaluation- Results

This evaluation measures the success of the training program in terms that executives and managers can understand such as increased production, increased sales, decreased costs, improved quality, reduced frequency of accidents, higher profits or return on investment, positive changes in management style or in general behavior, increase in engagement levels of direct reports and favorable feedback from customers, peers and subordinates. For example, after training in April 2005, the sales continued to increase throughout 2005 (Figure 3).



Figure 3 - Level 4 Evaluation Showing Increase in Sales.

However, Level 4 evaluations are difficult to measure and correlate with training. For example, the increase in sales could be attributed to several factors such as training and product promotions.

Evaluations:

- **Quality training.** Measure a reduction in number of defects.
- **Safety training.** Measure reduction in number or severity of accidents.
- **Sales training.** Measure change in customer retention, sales volume, and profitability on each sale after the training program has been implemented.
- **Management training.** Measure increase in engagement levels of direct-reports.
- **Technical training.** Measure reduction in time to complete tasks, forms and reports; reduced calls to the help desk; or improved use of software or systems.
- **Other:** Measure changes in staff turnover, number of complaints, growth, attrition, wastage, failures, non-compliance, quality ratings, achievement of standards and accreditations and customer retention.