



Think about it... Two learners arrive at the same program. One knows exactly what she wants to get out of it. The other arrives with just a vague idea of what the program is about. Who is likely to come away with greater value?

The Three Keys to Getting the Most from Your Training Experience as a Participant

To get your “money’s worth” from your upcoming training and development opportunity:

- Get Ready
- Get Engaged
- Get Results

GET READY

Getting prepared is one of the most important things you can do to get value from a training program and includes:

- Getting clear about what YOU want.
- Getting your supervisor’s agreement.

Get Clear About What YOU Want

If you don’t know what you want to get out of a learning experience, you will get less than you could have. Whether you signed up for a program voluntarily or whether it is a “command performance,” you will get a better return on your investment of time if you figure out “*What’s in it for me?*”

The “*What’s in it for*

me?” (WIIFM) for each person attending the same program will be different. Your personal WIIFM depends on your job responsibilities, career goals, interests, experience, and development needs. No one can define your WIIFM for you so you will benefit by taking a few minutes to become clear about what you, personally, want in return for the time you will be investing. (To do this, use **Worksheet #1** located in this Toolkit.)

Get Your Supervisor’s Agreement



Once you are clear about what YOU want to get out of the training, share it with your supervisor. Take the completed “*What’s in it for me?*” *Worksheet* to your supervisor for review.

Meeting with your supervisor before you go to a training program has many benefits. For one thing, it is a great opportunity to gain additional feedback on your performance and some coaching on how you can improve. You also want to be confident that you and your supervisor are in agreement about your key developmental needs and opportunities. Another reason to meet with your supervisor is that you will need his or her support and approval to spend time improving your skills.

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People who discuss an upcoming program with their supervisors beforehand are much more likely to follow-through, transfer, and apply what they learned.

Write It Down

Make notes of your discussion with your supervisor. When you write down what you plan to do, you are more likely to do it. If your relationship with your supervisor is fairly formal, you might want to think about completing and signing a “Learning Contract” at the end of your meeting. (Use or adapt **Worksheet #2** at the end of this Toolkit.)

If your relationship with your supervisor is more informal, you should still summarize the meeting and your commitments in a memo or e-mail immediately afterward. (See **Worksheet #3** for a sample.)

Schedule a Follow-Up Meeting

Finally, schedule a time to meet with your supervisor soon after you return from the program. Do this as part of the pre-training discussion.

GET ENGAGED

The second key to getting the most from a training course is to get fully engaged in the experience. Whether you elected to attend the program or whether you were dragged in kicking and screaming, you will lose out on much of its potential benefit if you don't actively participate.

The elements of getting engaged are:

- Get your head in the game
- Get out of your comfort zone
- Get connected
- Get specific about what you are going to do
- Get your story straight

Get Your Head in the Game

To get something out of a learning opportunity, you have to *attend to it*, not just attend it. That is, you need to be present mentally as well as physically; you have to give it your full attention. If you are busy with your Blackberry

or laptop, or instant messaging half the time, then your head is never really in the game; your learning (and your subsequent performance) will suffer.

Similarly, if you rush out at every break and bury yourself in e-mail or voice-mail or calls to the office, you lose in two ways:

- You become distracted and miss the beginning of the next section, either because you are physically late or because you are still mentally focused on other issues.
- You interact less with other participants and lose the opportunity for networking and learning from others – which may be as important as the course material itself.

Seize the opportunity to learn as much as you can while you have the chance. Declare the time you will be in training as an “emergencies only” contact period. Curb your own addiction to being constantly in touch. Use the training program as an excuse to stop, catch your breath, and THINK, instead of just react. Getting your head in the game is a conscious decision.

- Actively decide you are going to make the most of the opportunity, regardless of what brought you there.
- Suspend disbelief temporarily; open your mind to new ideas and approaches.
- Listen to what others have to say.
- Turn off your cell phone, pager, instant messenger, PDA, etc.
- Practice attending – giving the matter in front of you your undivided attention. It will make you more effective as a learner.

Get Out of Your Comfort Zone

Use the training program as an opportunity to improve your repertoire of interpersonal skills. To do so requires getting out of your comfort zone and consciously changing some habitual behaviors. If you are an extrovert, shut up; if you are an intro-

vert, speak up. Participate in role-playing exercises, even if you feel self-conscious; volunteer answers, even if they might be wrong. Play games to win; take risks in simulations. Experiment with different ways of interacting with other participants and see what happens. You won't find a better opportunity at work.

You won't get full value out of a training program if you hang back and always let others answer the questions, do the assignments, or lead the group. Training is the one place at work where there is no serious penalty for making mistakes. People learn fastest from their mistakes. Go ahead and make some – you will learn valuable lessons in the process. Use the Personal Challenge **Worksheet #4** in this Toolkit to set a personal challenge for yourself; use the training to try something outside your natural comfort zone.

Get Connected

The opportunity to connect with colleagues from different departments, locations, or units is a huge benefit of in-house training – seize it. Make a conscious effort to sit with people you do not already know. Expanding your personal network may be as valuable as the program itself.

Think about it...

Who would you be more willing to help or share information with: a complete stranger or someone you met at a training program, worked with on some of the exercises, and with whom you had an engaging discussion over lunch?

Get Specific About What You Are Going To Do

The value of any learning experience depends entirely on what you **do** with it. To get your “money's worth” from training and development, you need to set clear goals and formulate an action plan for putting your learning to work.

Select just one to three things you want to accomplish using your newly acquired knowledge and skills and enter them into a learning contract with your supervisor.

Get Your Story Straight

When you return to work, you will have a golden opportunity to demonstrate that you used your time well and that you can continue to learn and grow. To take advantage of this opportunity, you need a well-thought-out “elevator speech.” Your supervisor and colleagues are almost certain to ask you about your experience when you return to work. To seize this opportunity, you need a clear, succinct statement about what you learned, how you plan to use it, and how it will help you and your group. Use **Worksheet #5** in this Toolkit to get your story straight before you head back to the office. What are the key points you want to communicate about the training, your objectives, the value you will generate, and any help you might need? Now is the time to ask.

GET RESULTS

The real work begins when the training ends. You are not done until you have transferred what you learned to your job, and have used it in ways that improve your own, and your department's, performance.

The keys to getting results after training are to:

Get reconnected – When you return to work, even if your absence has been brief, reconnect with your colleagues and supervisor. They will be interested in your experience and will ask you about it. It's a great opportunity to make the points in your “elevator speech.” It is especially important that you reconnect with your supervisor. Ideally, you should have scheduled a follow up meeting with your supervisor as part of your pre-course discussion. If you haven't, do it now. Send a meeting request or reminder along the following lines: “I have scheduled a meeting with you on _____ at _____ to go over what I learned in the program I attended recently, how I will use it, the benefits, and the help I need.”

Share what you learned – Relating your experience to others also helps you; there is no better way to learn something than to teach it to someone else. As you talk to your colleagues about what you learned, try to explain a key concept or insight you had. You will benefit as much as they do. Better yet, write a short memo to your colleagues summarizing the most valuable points and how they apply to the work of your unit. Or offer to make a short presentation or give a demonstration at a staff meeting or a “brown bag” lunch. You will benefit in several ways: the preparation and delivery will reinforce and deepen your own understanding and skill; you will help your colleagues improve, which benefits everyone; and you will get a valuable reputation as a leader, learner, and collaborator.

Say “Thank You” – If the program involved feedback from your peers or supervisor, make it a point to follow up and thank everyone who contributed. Also, you will need other people’s help and support to apply what you learned.

Get going – Put your learning to work as soon as you can. (Use it or lose it!) Even though you may have accumulated a lot of unanswered e-mails, messages, and tasks while you were away, start implementing your action plan as soon as possible.

Keep going – A good start is important, but it is only that – a start. Real improvement takes sustained effort over time. The key is to build deliberate practice into your work – approach a task with a new goal instead of merely trying to get it done.

Get the help you need – No athlete ever made it to the Olympics without a coach. No musician ever played at Carnegie Hall without having studied under a master. Don’t try to do it all yourself; reach out to those who

can help you make faster, better progress, and ask for their help. Check in with other participants in the class, your supervisor, or another trusted advisor. Seek input on your progress and how you can further improve – it’s what every great performer in every field does. Other sources of support include books and articles, course materials, online references, instructors, fellow learners, and professional coaches.

Close the loop – When you have achieved a new level of skill and competence, schedule a meeting to share the results with your supervisor. Show how investing in you has paid off and be prepared to discuss the next phase of your development journey – in other words, get ready to do it all again!

**Contact Us at:
Human Resources,
Training &
Organizational
Development**

Reference:

[Getting Your Money’s Worth From Training and Development](#), by Andrew McK. Jefferson, Roy F.H., Pollack and Calhoun W. Wick

Worksheet # 1

What's In It For Me?

Name: _____ Training Program Title: _____ Program Date: _____

Instructions for Participants

In the first column of the row labeled "Your Input," write two to five bullet points that summarize the key deliverables for your unit. Why does your unit exist? How does it create value for the organization? This step is important – training and development must ultimately support the organization's objectives.

In the box in column 2, write the specific results for which you, personally, are accountable. Ideally, these should be on the top of your mind and mesh exactly with your annual performance goals, but they are worth revisiting, if not.

In column 3, list what would help you do your current job better or prepare you for the next step in your development.

Once you are clear about your best personal opportunities, look at the course description and objectives. What does it cover? What does it promise? (If you don't know, find out.) Note these in column 4.

Now put what you have written in columns 3 and 4 together to fill in the box in column 5.

Schedule a time to review your completed Worksheet with your supervisor.

Instructions for Supervisors

Review your direct report's input. Compare this with your views. Discuss areas of agreement or differences of opinion with your direct report. Use the results to formulate a formal or informal "learning contract."

	Most Important Deliverables of My Unit	Most Important Results for Which I Am Personally Responsible	New or Improved Skills/Knowledge That Would Help Me Deliver Better Results	Objectives Covered in the Training/ Development Program	What I Want To Get Out of It (Be Able to Do Better or Differently)
Your Input					
Your Supervisor's Review	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree as written <input type="checkbox"/> See edits <input type="checkbox"/> Let's discuss	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree as written <input type="checkbox"/> See edits <input type="checkbox"/> Let's discuss	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree as written <input type="checkbox"/> See edits <input type="checkbox"/> Let's discuss	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree as written <input type="checkbox"/> See edits <input type="checkbox"/> Let's discuss	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree as written <input type="checkbox"/> See edits <input type="checkbox"/> Let's discuss
Comments					

Worksheet # 2**Learning Contract****YOUR COMMITMENT**

In order to maximize the value of my learning and development in the upcoming program titled, _____ I agree to:

- Complete all required pre-course reading and other assignments
- Attend and be actively engaged in all sessions
- Develop goals for applying what I learned to my work
- Execute a follow-through plan that improves my performance
- Report the results
- Share highlights and insights with my co-workers
- Other _____

Specifically, I will focus on _____ during the program in order to improve my _____ afterward.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

SUPERVISOR'S AGREEMENT

As the supervisor of the employee above, I agree to:

- Meet with my direct report before the program to discuss the most important developmental opportunities the training provides.
- Release my direct report from work for the day(s) of training.
- Minimize interruptions during the training.
- Meet again after the program to discuss the highlights of the session and provide coaching and support to mutually explore opportunities for application.
- Model the desired behaviors.
- Provide encouragement, support, and reinforcement for efforts to apply the training.
- Provide specific opportunities for my direct report to practice the new behavior and skills.
- Provide suggestions for continued development.

Our post-course follow-up meeting is scheduled for _____.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Worksheet # 3

Learning Memo of Agreement

Dear _____,

Thank you for meeting with me today to discuss the upcoming (titled) _____ program.

We agreed that the most important thing for me to focus on during the course was _____

in order to improve my performance in the area of _____.

You agreed that I have your permission to attend the training, with minimum interruptions, and to provide opportunities for me to practice my new skills/knowledge afterward.

You also agreed to provide coaching so that I can benefit from your expertise and experience.

We scheduled a post-course follow-up meeting on _____ at _____, at which I will share my reactions to the program, the most important insights, and my specific goals for achievement based on what I learned. I look forward to that discussion.

Thanks again for your support.

Sincerely,

Worksheet # 4

Personal Challenge

Instructions: Read the descriptions below. Choose a few new ways of interacting that you will experiment with during the training. Afterward, record your observations (results/reactions) and your intent (do more, do less) going forward.



Category	My Usual Response	I Am Going To Try	Result/Reaction	Plan Going Forward
Questions/Team Reports	<input type="radio"/> Jump in with the answers <input type="radio"/> Hang back and let others answer	<input type="radio"/> Consciously wait to encourage others to participate <input type="radio"/> Force myself to volunteer answers more often		<input type="radio"/> Do more <input type="radio"/> Do less <input type="radio"/> Other
Role Play and Demonstrations	<input type="radio"/> Volunteer immediately; enjoy being in front of the group <input type="radio"/> Try my best not to be picked on to demonstrate	<input type="radio"/> Hang back, encourage others to have a turn <input type="radio"/> Force myself to volunteer to be one of the players		<input type="radio"/> Do more <input type="radio"/> Do less <input type="radio"/> Other
Teamwork and Group Exercises	<input type="radio"/> Step into the leadership role. Take charge; organize the work <input type="radio"/> Be a great team player and support whoever takes the lead, but don't lead myself	<input type="radio"/> Consciously encourage others to lead the group; practice followership <input type="radio"/> Step up to the leadership role; ask to lead if someone else is always taking charge		<input type="radio"/> Do more <input type="radio"/> Do less <input type="radio"/> Other

Worksheet # 5

Elevator Speech

Instructions: Complete the four sentences below. If you can, practice your elevator speech with a partner.

The most important/striking/insightful/valuable (pick one) thing I learned was:

I am going to capitalize on this learning by:

The benefit for my unit will be:

I'll need the following help to make this happen:

