

The Three-Legged Stool for Training Success

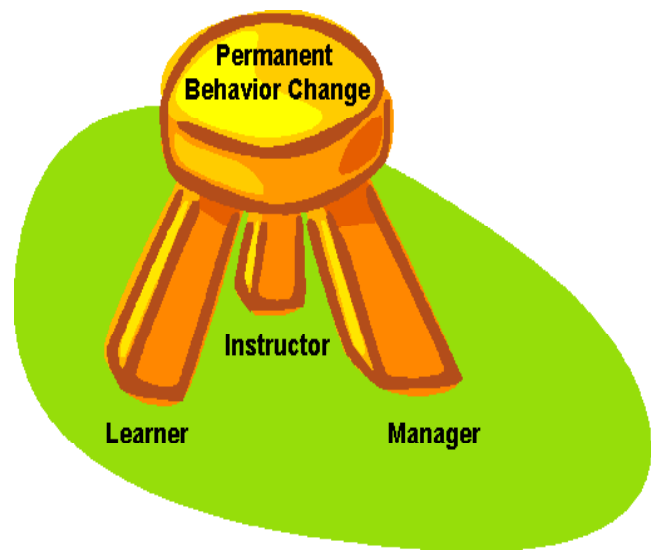
By Rebecca Morgan, CSP, CMC

The 16-session, 8-month manager training program was phenomenally successful. Ninety-three percent of the attendees were promoted within a year of their graduation. Why was the program so successful? Because all of the legs on the Training Success 3-legged stool were strong.

The components of the Training Success 3-legged stool are:

- Learner's manager
- Learner
- Instructor/learning facilitator

Most training puts the onus of success solely on the instructor. Occasionally a training will include participant accountability for the learning of information and showing proficiency in behavior. However almost never does any part of the responsibility for success reside with the learner's manager. But that component of the training is essential to success.



If one of the parties doesn't do their part, the stool becomes wobbly or collapses. Here are the responsibilities of each leg of the Training Success stool:

1) The learner's manager has to:

- Talk to the learner beforehand to determine areas of needed improvement and to ensure this training is the best way to acquire the needed skills and/or information.
- Be clear on how s/he expects the learner to perform differently as a result of the training.
- Co-create measures with the participant for determining if the learner successfully integrated new skills/information.
- Encourage the learner to take charge of his/her learning by being active in the training and getting what s/he needs from the session(s).
- Release the learner for training sessions, ensure s/he attends, and arrange coverage for the learner's duties while in training.
- Talk with his/her learner(s) regularly to discuss adapting the new skills to their job
- Coach the learner when needed.
- Give the learner positive feedback for observed behavior changes.
- Model effective behavior him/herself.
- Talks with the learning facilitator to get feedback on his/her learner.
- Support any reinforcement offered.

2) The learner has to:

- Talk to his/her manager beforehand to determine areas of needed improvement and to ensure the training is the best way to acquire the needed skills and/or information.
- Be clear on what s/he wants from the training and actively makes sure s/he gets it.
- Be fully committed to strengthening or learning new skills.
- Attend the sessions and be fully involved in the discussions and processes.
- Actively seek real-life, job-specific application of the principles discussed/skills learned.
- Complete any pre-reading or homework.
- Accept coaching from the instructor and/or manager.
- Participate in any follow-on reinforcement offered.

3) The learning facilitator/content provider has to:

- Provide stimulating, useful, and clear content and processes.
- Prepare pre- and post-learning assessments.
- Be approachable and open to dissenting opinions.
- Provide an integrated approach to learning, including job aids and practice.
- Create useful tools and resource materials.
- Give learners needed coaching/feedback.
- Make modifications to the program/tools when appropriate.
- Offer the learners' managers suggestions for coaching the learner.
- Provide appropriate follow-on reinforcement.

As a result of all the legs of the Training Success stool working in tandem, a solid base is created for permanent behavior change. Without three equally-strong legs, training is often a waste of time and money. Ensure your success by having all parties committed to successful results of your training effort.

Excerpted from *Grow Your Key Talent: Thought-Provoking Essays for Business Owners, Executives and Managers on Developing Star Staff* by Rebecca Morgan

Rebecca Morgan, CSP, CMC, specializes in creating innovative leadership development implementation solutions. She's appeared on 60 Minutes, Oprah, Forbes.com, *Wall Street Journal*, National Public Radio and *USA Today*. She's authored 26 books. For information on her services, books, and materials, or for permission to repost or reprint this article, contact her at 408/998-7977, Rebecca@RebeccaMorgan.com, www.RebeccaMorgan.com.

Pre- and Post-Training Discussion Guide for Learners' Managers

By Rebecca Morgan, CSP, CMC

To dramatically increase the ROI from any training your team members attend—internal or external—it's critical to have pre-and post-training discussions to ensure your learner is focused on tangible outcomes from the training and has accountability for applying new ideas. These discussions also illustrate you are invested in their sharpening their skills and information, and that you will support their learning and implementation of new ideas.

Your time investment is only three 10-minute conversations over a month. Not much at all! When you think about the costs of your staff's time to attend the training, and if there are travel costs, and perhaps a registration fee, this is next to nothing. Three 10-minute discussions will help you and your learner get much more out of the training.

Pre-Training Discussion

Within the week before the learner attends the training, discuss the expected outcomes for him/her from the session based on the agenda and his/her development plan. This is not your time to pontificate about what you know about the subject. You want to show you support the learner in hearing new ideas and will help him/her adapt and implement them on return. You are also showing the learner s/he is accountable for getting something useful out of the session, not just a “vacation” day off work.

You might also require the learner share at your next staff meeting his/her best 3-5 ideas gleaned from the training, as well as how s/he plans to implement the action items, and ask for the team's support as s/he tries the new ideas. If several team members attended the same session, have each of them report on the top idea s/he plans to implement. You can also encourage them to form a “study group” which meets to discuss how they are implementing the new ideas.

1- to 5-Day Post-Training Discussion

Within a week of the training —ideally within a day or two —have another 10-minute conversation to hear what s/he learned and how s/he plans to implement the ideas on the job. Help him/her understand how the new good ideas can be modified for your environment. Don't discount the ideas or you'll discourage the learner and squelch his/her enthusiasm. Focus on helping him/her tweak it for your situation.

It's important that you acknowledge progress and not expect perfection. Applying new skills takes time and practice, which means it's rarely going to be perfect at first. Allow for some less-than-perfect attempts and step in to gently coach when needed.

If any reinforcement is offered by the learning facilitator, you want to encourage the learner to be actively involved. This will help cement key concepts and will provide a vehicle to refresh key points and actions.

30-Day Post-Training Follow Up

Thirty days after the training, have another 10-minute conversation. Now you want to know what your learner implemented, what road blocks s/he may have encountered, what successes were gained, what needs to be tweaked, and how you can continue to support the learner in refining the application of the ideas.

Focus on reinforcing what they have tried, even if it not successful at this point. It takes courage to try new ideas.

Also, you want to uncover if you or anyone else has been a roadblock so you can do what you can to remove that impediment.

And finally, you want to see how to continue to support the learner in trying new ideas to become more effective.

When you have these three conversations, you'll find your learners are much more engaged in and get more out of any training they attend. You will be more invested in their implementing the new ideas, and the rest of your team will be excited to attend more training to become even more effective.

You can share the following pages before each of your meetings so your learner has time to think about his/her answers. You want to have a discussion, so don't accept their answers in just an email.

Pre-Training Discussion

1. Based on the training agenda, what do you want to focus on most? What do you want to get out of the training? (E.g., I want to focus on these 3 items....)

Here's what I'd like you to also focus on...

2. How can you ensure you get what you want from the program? (E.g, I plan to turn off my phone so I can focus, take good notes with action items, ask questions when something isn't clear, engage other attendees to get their insights and best practices on the content, commit to attending any reinforcement activities that are offered.)

I will support your being able to focus by... (e.g., I will not message you unless it's urgent, I will tell others not to contact you unless they absolutely have to, I will ensure you are not pressured to leave the training early or use your breaks at the training to work).

3. Think about how I can support you in applying the new ideas when you return to work. We will talk again within a few days of the training to discuss what you learned, how you intend to apply the ideas, and how I can support you in implementing the ideas from the training.

1- to 5-Day Post-Training Discussion

1. What were the most important concepts, skills and action ideas you learned in the training?

Are those different than what we decided together you'd focus on getting from the training?
If so, why?

If you didn't get what you expected, what could you do next time to ensure you get what you and I wanted?

2. How do you plan to implement the ideas? What do we need to discuss to modify them for our situations? Who else needs to be involved in implementing the new ideas?
3. What 3-5 ideas do you plan to share in the next staff meeting that would be useful to the rest of the team? What do you plan to share with them that you're going to implement in the next 30 days? What support would you like from them?
4. What support would be helpful from me to ensure you can try the new ideas here, knowing there will be some hiccups along the way?

30-Day Post-Training Follow Up

1. Let's review the most important concepts, skills and action ideas you learned in the training that you intended to implement and what you actually implemented.
2. Share your successes in implementing these ideas, even if just partial ones.
3. What ideas haven't you tried yet because you're not sure how to modify them to work here?
4. What road blocks, if any, did you encounter? What did you do to try to bypass them? How could I help you get through them? Was I one of them?
5. How can I continue to support you in refining the application of the ideas?