

# Sustaining the impact of training initiatives; how to keep a good thing going...

Three keys to post-meeting success.

Take a moment to reflect on all of the hard work, time and resources that have been invested into your last product launch or training meeting. It is no small undertaking. And as any business person would expect, you deserve to see a return on your investment. But more often than not, as the bright lights are packed away and the sales force flies home to their territories, the potential for that return diminishes. This shortcoming may not lie with the quality of the event, but with what comes after...or, more to the point; what doesn't...

To see a higher yield on your meeting investment, you must plan for it in advance. A product launch or training initiative shouldn't end with a closing session or wrap up, but rather it needs to be sustained throughout the year. This is when you'll see the real payoff – not only in dollars, but also in performance.

Learning and Development initiatives are typically divided into distinct phases:

## **Pre-work/Preparation Phase**

## **Classroom or eLearning Instruction Phase (“the Event”)**

## **Sustainment or Application On The Job Phase**

The vast majority of time, significant energy and resources are spent on “the Event” phase, with relatively little allocated to sustainment – the pull through and application of the learning that occurred. This arrangement reinforces and perpetuates events-based training as a “once and done” approach – one that falls short of sustaining skills and recouping precious resources. However, by reconsidering classroom or eLearning as being the beginning of the training “process” instead of the end of the training “Event,” and then budgeting sufficient resources to see it through, we will not only witness improved results in the field, but also realize a greater return on our training investment. T&D experts are increasingly recognizing the need to budget more in the follow-through and sustainment phase. Ken Blanchard, co-author of the One Minute Manager<sup>®</sup>, recently put it this way: “Organizations should spend ten times more energy reinforcing the training they have just conducted instead of looking for the next great learning initiative.” While the precise spend or energy investment on training reinforcement may vary from case-to-case, here are 3 keys for how you can succeed using this fundamental approach:

- 1 Plan for after “the Event”** – Make post meeting pull through a part of the project plan from the beginning and assign it to someone on the project team. Don't let it be an afterthought - put sufficient time and effort into the post-meeting plan of action. Program tools and resources should be readily available to the participants and their managers. Ideally, there should be processes in place for how you will monitor and

coach to the skills learned and how you will systematically ensure that the concepts are being practiced and pulled through in the field.

- 2 Budget appropriately** – Again, budgets are often consumed by “the Event,” leaving little to no money for post event pull through activities. As a rule of thumb moving forward, allocate no less than 25% of the total event training budget to post event activities. Stay the course to ensure that this critical component of success is not overlooked or pilfered as the event nears.
- 3 Involve managers** – Bear in mind that managers have the greatest influence on the learning of their employees. Managers should be fully engaged in the post-event phase to serve as coaches, mentors and role models. After all, managers control the environment in which learning transfer and application takes place. Therefore, responsibility for learning is co-owned by the Training Function and the employee’s manager. Thus, it is essential to gain their support and to get managers directly involved in the sustainment process. This will not only help them to appreciate the true “value” of training, but will also motivate them to support sustainment initiatives as resources become increasingly scarce.

To further enhance the fundamentals of this approach, apply suitable technologies and other available tools to facilitate post meeting communication, sustainment and monitoring. The right meeting platform can be leveraged post event to deliver consistent communications and direction, reinforcing skills learned and keeping expectations for performance top of mind. A suitable platform can also reinforce the appropriate behaviors, recognize success and even report results to foster competition and rewards among and between regions/districts.



To discuss how MC3 and our Tabletop® training and field force engagement technology can help you sustain the impact of your initiatives, contact Robert Armstrong at [Robert.Armstrong@mc3.com](mailto:Robert.Armstrong@mc3.com) or at 484.887.7370.

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