

# JUSTIFYING THE INVESTMENT IN LEADERSHIP TRAINING



After reflecting on the philosophy classes that we took in college, and comparing notes, we realized our experiences were strikingly similar. When it came time for the final exam, our professors dramatically turned to a chalkboard and wrote out a version of the question: “Why live?”

And, tempted though we were to respond by writing down something like “Why not?” and head for the door, we succumbed to traditional expectations and filled blue book after blue book recounting what we had learned from reading the work of one philosopher after another throughout the semester.

**WHEN YOU BEGIN WITH THE BUSINESS RESULTS, THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF CONSISTENCY THAT SURPRISES NO ONE.**

Now, fast forward to this very moment and let’s consider the question: “Why do leadership training?” We’ll come back to what we think is a viable answer shortly but, first, a little side story. In large part because of the model that has been ascribed to him since the 1960s, there is a natural inclination to attribute measurement strategy for leadership training to Donald Kirkpatrick. He was the first person

to publicly suggest the following parameters of impact analysis for a training intervention:

- **Reaction:** Did learners like the learning experience?
- **Learning:** Did the learners learn anything?
- **Behavior:** Did the learners change behavior because of what they learned?
- **Results:** Are there any results we can tie to the behavior change?

In the mid-1980s, there was a highly disruptive article published by training guru Bob Pike that essentially posed the question: “What if we turned the Four Levels Model upside down?”

Donald Kirkpatrick was initially resistant to the suggestion, but later came around to the idea. Donald’s successors, Jim and Wendy Kirkpatrick of Kirkpatrick Partners, analyzed the model and inverted the starting point for effective measurement strategy.

When you begin with the results most organizations seek, there is an element of consistency that surprises no one. There is a bottom-line, productivity measure that needs to continue migrating upward and to the right; there is the organization’s ability to attract and keep key talent. There are also the transformational commitments many organizations make to positively impact the world in any number of creative

and imaginative ways. Regardless of what those strategic initiatives happen to be, they are the starting point for measuring the impact of training. You literally ask questions, and get answers, that cascade from results to behavior to learning instead of the other way around – for example:

- What are our key strategic initiatives?
  - How can training help us achieve the objectives dictated by our strategy?
- If employees implemented what they learned in training, what would be different?
  - What would people at all levels start doing? Stop doing? Do more of?
- Given the answers to those questions, what form should our training take?
  - Is it both relevant and engaging?
  - Does our design intentionally include and feature extended stakeholders (e.g., the managers of the trainees who possess the potential to drive desired behavior change)?

So, why do leadership training? You do leadership training to enable your organization to achieve its strategic objectives. We are well past the point in life where regurgitating what we know in a blue book or two matters to anyone. 

*Marshall Goldsmith is the world authority in helping successful leaders get even better. Sam Shriver is the executive vice president at The Center for Leadership Studies. Email Marshall and Sam.*