

Evaluation of Impact of CPD

This chapter contains:

- Overview
- How your organisation can Evaluate the impact of CPD
- Evidence Required for Accreditation
- Guidance for Evaluation of impact of CPD
- Adding Value: The range of Good Practices

Overview

"I like the approach that Brinkerhoff has used. You will be able to adapt his solutions to your own."

Donald L. Kirkpatrick, PhD

Despite significant annual training spends many organisations still struggle when it comes to the basics of assessing the outcomes and the benefits of their Training & Development interventions. Certainly, our experience over the years with CPD Accredited Employers is that many of them find the whole 'evaluation' question to be their greatest bug-bear.

Discussions about 'assessing value add' or 'evaluation' tend to focus around two widely accepted, and broadly similar models, namely The Kirkpatrick Model (known as Level 1-4) and the Phillips Model (known as Level 1-5).

However, it has been reliably estimated that barely 40% of Irish firms go even as far as Level 1¹ when it comes to an assessment of their CPD/Training. In short, it seems most HR & Training professionals don't have either the time, the resources or the support necessary to complete data-heavy evaluations, as required by the Kirkpatrick and Phillips models.

Difficulties in data management and reporting experienced by evaluators have led them to explore alternative tools.

The *Success Case Method* (SCM) has been honed in recent years by Robert Brinkerhoff to tackle the problems being experienced by evaluators in using more conventional (but complex) evaluation techniques. It is a simple and efficient method comprising two main components:

- a) a survey to identify a small number of successful cases; and
- b) in-depth interviews to ascertain the nature of this success, including critical success factors.

We feel Brinkerhoff's low-cost, high-yield *Success Case Method* (SCM) will be appropriate for many of our CPD Accredited Employers as it offers a quick, practical, and accurate evaluation approach that provides credible information about the success of a learning initiative: what results it is getting, what is working, what is not, and how it can be improved.

Indeed, organisations that become accomplished in SCM evaluations may move on to work more in depth with the widely recognised Kirkpatrick and Phillips measurement models.

¹ (Alan Nuzum, Programme Manager, Skillnets, & Gerry Doyle, Impact Measurement Centre, HRD Magazine, Spring 2005).

PURPOSE OF EVALUATING IMPACT OF CPD

- To find out if learning has taken place
- If learning has taken place, how can it be/is it applied in your organisation
- An effective evaluation should also highlight barriers to change or obstacles to learning with solutions as to how these can be removed and overcome.
- Evaluation thus allows future training to be improved, growing the capability to meet emerging business needs
- Finally, regular evaluation and feedback can increase commitment to and support for CPD

Evaluation of impact of CPD

EVIDENCE FOR ACCREDITATION

8.1 Evaluation of CPD benefits happens in a systematic fashion

- The objectives and intended impact of CPD are planned
- Clear roles for completing evaluations are agreed
- Sample documentation illustrates how the effectiveness of CPD initiatives is assessed

HOW CAN YOU DO THIS IN PRACTICE?

- Ask the question: “What does success look like?” before embarking on major CPD initiatives and define impacts you expect to see as a result of learning
- Include in your CPD policy who is responsible for evaluation. Include also guidelines on Knowledge Sharing when returning from external formal CPD and, again, where responsibilities lie.
- The Success Case Method offers a user-friendly, feasible approach to evaluation

8.2 Evaluations link learning to agreed objectives

- [At audit] Upper management know what resources go into CPD
- [At audit] Upper management can describe CPD/Training that they have put in place to support the development of engineering professionals and it has been found to improve the organisation’s performance

HOW CAN YOU DO THIS IN PRACTICE?

- The Success Case Method looks at the most successful learners and the impact this development has had. It also looks at those who failed to apply learning or failed to learn and asks: Why?
- Kirkpatrick’s Model suggests that you can evaluate or measure the impact of a development activity in four ways, or on four levels: Reaction, Learning, Behaviour/Performance and Business Results.
- As well as business metrics (and other tangible data) managers should report other benefits of development activities e.g. staff stress levels reduced; morale seems better etc

Getting Started with Evaluation: The Success Case Method (SCM)

Developed by Robert O. Brinkerhoff, this is a quick and simple process that combines analysis of extreme groups with case study and story-telling. The essential purpose of the Success Case Method (SCM) is to find out how to make organisational learning initiatives more effective.

The Success Case Method identifies and explains the factors that differentiate successful from unsuccessful adopters of new initiatives.

The Success Case Method has two fundamental parts. First, the evaluator identifies the few programme participants who were the most, and the least, successful. This is usually accomplished with a brief 3-5 item survey. That is, all participants are surveyed to determine, by self report, to what extent they are using the new methods and tools a new initiative intended them to use, and what results, if any, they are accomplishing.

A random sample from among the most and least ‘successful’ are interviewed to dig deep into their experience to determine the exact nature and extent of their success. More specifically, the evaluator seeks to discover:

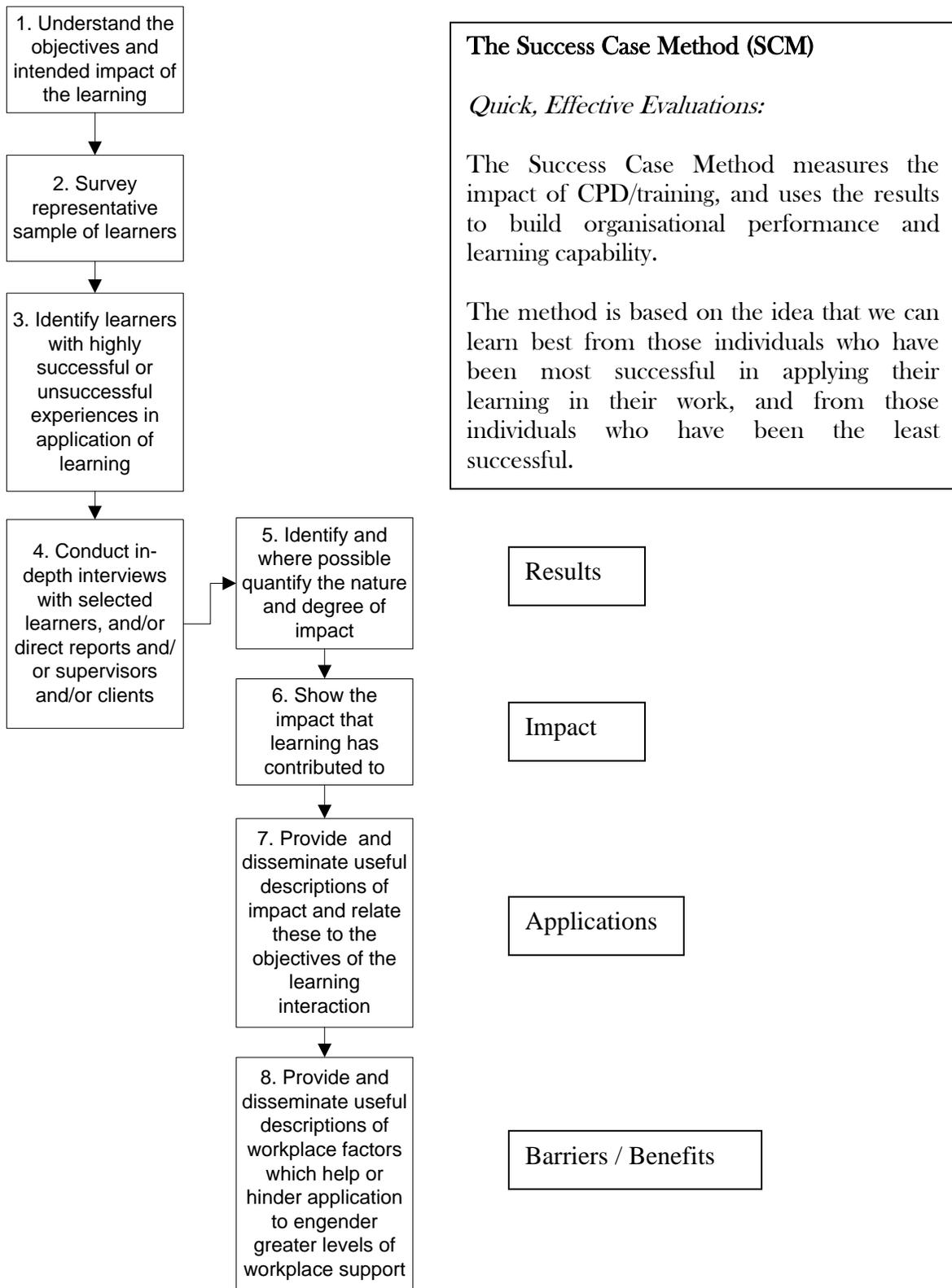
- Exactly what learning they used, when they used it, how, when etc.
- What results they accomplished
- How valuable the results are (e.g., in euros)
- What environmental factors enabled their application and results.

People who feel they didn’t learn or apply CPD are interviewed to determine why they were unable to use or benefit from the programme. Specifically, they are asked what got in the way, what factors kept them from being successful, and so forth.

The results of a Success Case study are communicated in “story” form. That is, the evaluator finds the most compelling and descriptive examples of success the programme has achieved, then documents these examples in a few brief but telling stories.

The Success Case Method differs from typical more quantitative methods in that it does not seek to learn about the “average” or modal participant in an initiative, it intentionally seeks the very best that a CPD initiative is producing, to help determine if the value is worthwhile, and whether it is likely that it can be leveraged to a greater number of participants.

It is a down-to-earth tool that Training & Development managers and others can use to help them get information, quickly and relatively cheaply, that they can use to more effectively guide CPD initiatives. (It can also highlight if a more detailed evaluation is worthwhile.)



Adapted from Brinkerhoff, R. (2001) High Impact Learning

Implementing the Success Case Method

There are five primary steps to implementing and applying the Success Case Method:

1. Focus and plan a Success Case study

The purpose of the study should be defined and clarified. Examples of a study purpose include:

- To determine what parts of a new programme are working well for learners, and what parts are not.
- To provide exemplary models of behaviour and programme applications that can be used to inspire and motivate others.

Once the purpose of the study has been defined, a study design should then be developed taking into account time frame and resource requirements.

2. Create the “impact model” that defines what success should look like

The next step in the Success Case Method is to define success for the CPD initiative: If the initiative is really working, what will success look like? Impact results should be identified, and an impact model can be developed that focuses on intended results by intended users.

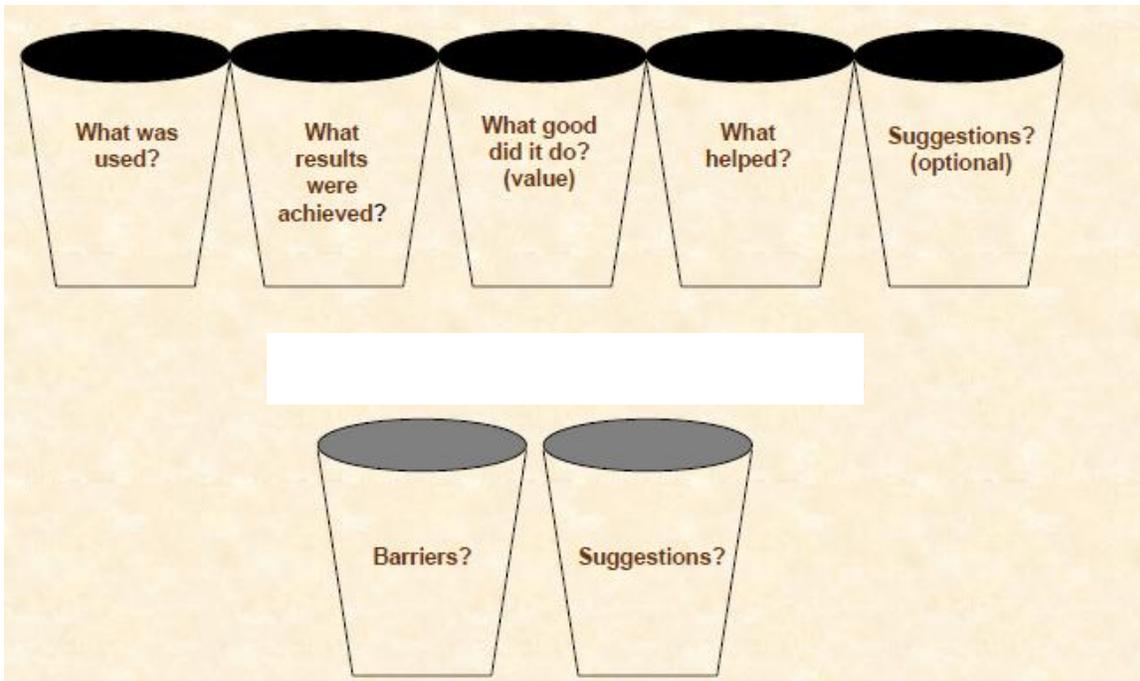
3. Design and implement a survey to search for best and worst cases

A short survey (five to seven questions) can be designed and administered to determine where success is being most/least experienced. The survey may list key behaviours, tasks, actions, tools, etc. that have been associated with success, and respondents are asked to report on which key actions and tools they are using and what results, if any, are being achieved.

The surveys are then analysed, and high and low (if required) performers are identified for follow-up interviews.

4. Interview and document success and non-success cases

High and low performers are randomly selected for interviews (usually about 45 minutes in length). One goal of the interviews is to document the very individual ways in which the training or CPD intervention has been used. A second goal is to identify and document factors in the organisational environment that facilitate or hinder implementation and adoption. The critical dimensions of success or failure are also explored and documented. Issues that contribute to success and non-success can be grouped into the following categories:



It is important that evidence exists to support the claim of success or failure. If no evidence is found during the interview to support the claim, the claim is discarded.

5. Communicate findings, conclusions and recommendations

A meeting can then be held with key decision makers to help them understand the study's results, and reach consensus about the key implications of the findings. The recommendations are crafted by the key decision makers, with support and facilitation provided by the evaluator. A summary report is then prepared.

The Success Case Method can produce a number of benefits to organisations including:

- An increased commitment to and support for CPD;
- An increased capability to achieve business results from learning; and
- A greater capability to meet emerging business needs.

The Success Case Method can be a quick way to determine

- if a full-fledged evaluation is required.
- Can help determine if a pilot initiative is suitable for a larger audience

