

Make Sure Your Training Leads to Changed Behavior

November 2005—I have just attended a full-day workshop on communicating with influence. I feel invigorated and have many great ideas to take with me. I created an action plan and feel fully prepared to begin taking steps toward it. What a great training session!

June 2007—I vaguely remember a session I once attended on communicating with influence. The binder of materials is probably on that dusty shelf over there. Somewhere in there is an action plan that I created and meant to work through. I'm sure that when I returned to my office after that session, the e-mails and workload took precedence and the lessons from the training quickly drifted to the back of my mind. Maybe I will pull that binder out one day. . . .

Does this sound familiar?

If you're a workplace learning professional, it's your responsibility to keep key training objectives at the forefront of participants' busy work lives so that they lead to changed behavior. There are many strategies to help do this; below are just a few:

- **Offer a series of shorter courses rather than one longer learning event.** Participants are exposed to the content multiple times, over a series of sessions, so they have more opportunities to process the information.
- **Assign homework or post-work to be completed and returned after the session.** For example, have participants read an article related to the course topic and answer questions about it, or have them complete a related activity and report on it.
- **Involve the participants' managers in the process.** Create a guide for participants to use as they talk through their actions with their managers. The guide encourages dialogue and provides participants with a tool to start the process. Talk with managers before the program to ensure they understand the importance of their role in supporting the training.
- **Post signs around the office to remind participants of the key take-aways from the session.** This is a great way to help them remember the discussion and apply the lessons they learned.
- **Assign each participant a "buddy."** Encourage the buddies to share their actions with each other and develop a plan for working together and holding each other accountable after the learning event.
- **Ask participants to share their action plans aloud.** Creating an action plan is one thing, but it is another to read it out loud to others. This is a great way to increase the possibility that participants will take action.
- **Follow up with participants one month after the session to evaluate skill transfer on the job.** Offer coaching and assistance to those who need additional support.
- **Utilize technology.** Use discussion boards and forums to post questions and encourage participant dialogue about the key training concepts. Post resources and training materials for participants to access after the session.