# HOW TO…

ENSURE LEARNING TRANSFERS TO THE WORKPLACE

Lots of training fails NOT because it isn't well written or properly researched, but because we don't spend long enough thinking about the transfer of learning.

Transfer of learning is vital – if we can't transfer what's covered in the training back to the workplace, then everyone has wasted their time. The problem with transfer of learning is that it doesn't sit firmly with one set of people or in one place. It's the responsibility of lots of people, and unfortunately, when lots of people are involved, everyone expects someone else to take responsibility!

Transfer of learning is something that needs to be considered throughout the whole training process – from the initial TNA, through design, delivery and follow-up.

Work done by Dr. Ina Weinbauer-Heidel from the Institute of Transfer Effectiveness has researched the factors that contribute to transfer of learning. There are many things that effect transfer – a lot of them outside of our control.

However, she found **12 Levers of Transfer Effectiveness** that really make a difference. So, if our training solution is built around these levers, it has a far greater chance of having the positive outcome that everyone wants,
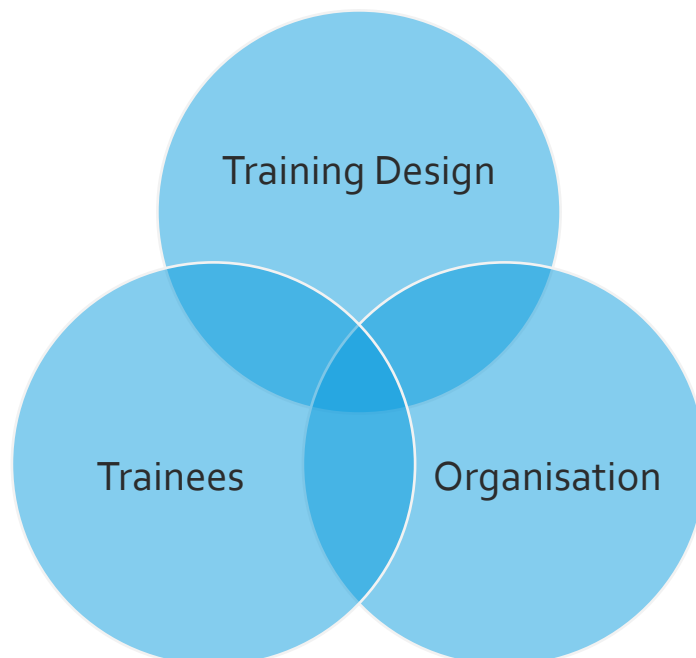
LEVERS ASSOCIATED WITH TRAINEES

- **Transfer Motivation** – Individuals WANT to complete the learning. No-one is forcing them.
- **Self-Efficacy** – People believe that the training will add value and they can benefit from it (and be capable of completing it)
- **Transfer Volition** – Individuals have the resilience to stick at it (particularly longer programmes) and keep going even if it gets difficult.

LEVERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ORGANISATION

- **Support from Managers** – Managers take an interest in what has been learned, and actively encourage people to apply what they've learned.
- **Support from Peers** –Colleagues are supportive and encourage those completing training to put learning into practice.
- **Transfer Expectation** – The organisation expects a change to occur as a result of training, and notices when it is applied (or not).
- **Opportunities for Application** – There are opportunities for people to put into practice what they've learned back in the work environment. If they don't occur naturally, they will be created.
- **Personal Transfer Capacity** – People are allowed to take the time needed to apply what they have learned (e.g. not pressured to hit unrealistic targets whilst mastering new skills).

LEVERS ASSOCIATED WITH TRAINING DESIGN

- **Clarity of Expectations** – Those completing the learning know exactly what they will learn to do and want to do it.
- **Content Relevance** – There is a clear link between content and requirements of the job – the features and benefits of the training are clear and relevant to participants.
- **Active Practice** – The training provides real opportunities to experience, experiment and practice new skills in a safe environment.
- **Transfer Planning** – Individuals are clear about what they need to do after training, and have clarity about how they will do it.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR TRAINING DESIGNERS?

Clearly, as training designers (or L&D managers) we can influence every single one of these levers. We can help create a buzz around the training and share success stories before we start enrolling people. We can discuss the organisational factors with key stakeholders to put mechanisms in place to make sure that the environment is right for transferring training. This may mean educating managers, getting agreement for stretch projects, or making sure that successes from training are publicised.

Our main area of influence is under the four areas designated to training design. In simple terms, the minimum that we should do as training designers is:

- Write clear, realistic behavioural objectives for the training.
- Link content to objectives and objectives to the job. A good way to do this is to specify measurable outcomes as well as behavioural objectives.
- Build in time to every session for proper practice. It doesn't always have to be role plays or job simulations – there are lots of ways to build in practical learning.
- Help people to draw up a clear and detailed action plan. Sometimes the actions may be set for delegates, sometimes they need to select their own, but everyone should leave a training session with a clear plan of what to do now. Sadly, this is often rushed or missed altogether.