

## Talent Development 19 Overcoming Barriers

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



Section 3.2 in the CPTD Certification program for ATD is Consulting and Business Partnering. Section D reads, “Skill in identifying, minimizing, and overcoming organizational barriers to implementing talent development solutions and/or strategies.”

I will discuss six of the main reasons for barriers and suggest solutions to each one.

### **Lack of Commitment**

We see many examples of top leaders who talk a good game in terms of developing their workforce, but the level of commitment is mostly lip service. In the daily pressures for short term deliverables, many leaders fail to follow through with resources or emphasis to make their stated intentions into reality.

The cure for this is to have the courage to stick with programs, even if the pathway gets a bit rocky. Once leaders give the slightest hint of backing away from the agreed-upon path it is the kiss of death to enthusiasm for the program.

If this phenomenon occurs, the results of the training effort will be a tiny fraction of what was originally envisioned.

### **Too Many Surveys**

When designing development efforts, surveys are used to determine which areas need the most help. Unfortunately, in many cases organizations have too many surveys and

ones that are poorly designed. When this happen, people end up giving false or warped input or simply fail to respond.

If workers do not see a strong positive correlation between their input on surveys and the resulting training, they lose enthusiasm and become jaded. The cure is to have robust and infrequent surveys. For the “how to” of doing surveys well, I refer you to my [prior article](#) on this topic.

### **Poorly Designed Training**

When training programs are inconvenient, boring, or otherwise flawed, they fail to have the impact that was intended. If people are going to give their full effort willingly, the activities must be inspired and of top quality throughout.

Often organizations skimp on the resources needed to provide the very best training. When workers see this happen, they turn their energies to other more vital activities and put the training on the “back burner.”

One decision that needs to be carefully considered is whether the internal training staff is up to world class standards of design and delivery. If there is any doubt, it is a good idea to go with an external expert in the particular area that is being developed. Many organizations shy away from outside help because it is perceived the result will be too expensive.

When organizations fail to provide top quality resources in order to save some cash, it severely undermines the entire training effort.

### **Lay-On Programs**

If the program is a formality or lay-on type of training, then people are going to be less enthusiastic than is required for success. The cure here is to have good involvement by the people who will ultimately get trained in specifying and designing the program.

People need to see a very strong connection between the development plan and what the organization is trying to achieve. They need to feel that the training will benefit each one of them in their future. You cannot expect people to participate with their full energy if they do not see a better future in it for them.

### **Antiquated Training Methods**

Some organizations are still in the dark ages when it comes to the methods used to conduct the training. Not only does the material need to be fresh and up to date, but the tools used must be the latest technology.

Experiential learning always translates into real learning far better than just lecture or exercises following reading assignments.

### **Poor Follow Through**

All training events have a finite schedule. Regardless of the topic being trained, people will get a lot out of the effort while the training is going on. Many organizations fail to recognize that the half-life of the benefits is really quite short. For example, I do a lot of leadership training, and I believe the benefits atrophy in a matter of weeks unless I follow up with materials after the training.

For a training effort to produce lasting results, there needs to be a follow-on plan to keep the material fresh and being used until it has time to become habitual behavior. For this aspect, I like to use follow on video programs that stretch the learning at least 30 days after the formal training is complete.

Supervisors should hold periodic review sessions where they ask people to describe how they are using the new knowledge in their daily activities. They should raise the consciousness of the new skills being used to the benefit of the organization.

Work to avoid these six pitfalls, and you will have overcome the most significant barriers with your talent development program.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of: *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*, and *Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change*. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations.

