Are You Aligning Training Goals With Business Goals?  
Four Steps to Establish Congruency  
By Cordell Riley  

Two types of training exist. The first and most basic centers on teaching employees to improve their performance of required skills and tasks. The second type does that too, but produces far more transformational results because it also teaches skills and behaviors that align with larger company initiatives and goals.

A way to illustrate this point is to envision a golf caddy as a trainer. That caddy can walk the course, hand the golfer one club at a time and say, “This is the best club for this shot.” That might improve the golfer’s game. But what if the caddy added a higher level of information by giving perspective on the hole’s layout, the potential hazards in the path and a strategy for playing the entire course?

Similar lessons apply in many settings. Do you want your child’s piano teacher to teach only the mechanics of pushing down a key, or to give an overview of a piece of music? If you hire a landscaper for your yard, do you want to discuss only one plant, or do you want to collaborate on an overall, transformational plan? Given choices like those, one would prefer the bigger picture. But how does one do that in planning a company’s training process? Here are four important steps to take.

**Step 1) Define & Keep the Most Important Objectives in Mind**

Do you strive to create a company known for delivering superlative customer satisfaction? That is a great objective, but to reach it, the company must define specifics that can take it there—what the firm would like its training to achieve.

For example, you could plan to train your phone representatives to resolve 90% of all complaints during customers’ first calls. Or, you could focus on training those employees to deliver the kind of care that gets 90% of callers to report that they are extremely satisfied on postcall surveys. When you define goals, you can design training that achieves them.

Another way of stating this principle is, “begin with the end in mind.” That means understanding the bigger vision of what you would like your organization to become, then defining specific training steps to get there.

**Step 2) Break Down the Silo Walls**

Trainers are often brought into different company sectors and encouraged to stay in them. They might teach only skills needed to service or install products, provide customer service, prepare food or sell on the retail floor. But what if the trainers thought outside the silos and delivered valuable training that resulted in improvements across the organization?

One way to reach this objective is to initiate discussions between the training team and the people who create marketing and advertising, manage the supply chain and oversee the online presence. The more disciplines that are invited into the process, the more likely the training team will find ways to make the training process more encompassing and effective.

**Step 3) Do Not Create Training in a Vacuum**

Whether the training team works in-house or an outside training company is utilized, engage team members in conversations regarding company collateral. This should include everything from quarterly reports, relevant trade publications, news stories about the organization, press releases and all other pertinent documents. Do all those materials suggest any untapped opportunities to align the training specifics with larger trends, goals and initiatives?

**Step 4) Tie the Training to Measurable Metrics**

It is essential to develop clear metrics to measure before and after training. It is the only way to understand what the training has accomplished, and it is a way to track progression toward the goals.

The following suggestions develop metrics that do more than gather data and reveal deeper progress.

• If the vision is to become a leader in customer service and retention, survey customers before and after employees have completed the training. Ask customers about their overall satisfaction with their last purchase, the likelihood that they will recommend the company to other people and other factors.

• To gain maximum value from a limited-time offer and to offer training to support that goal, the goal could be a certain percentage of sales improvement among employees who took the training. Measure and report on those results after the training has been delivered.

• If implementing human resources training to increase employee retention and become an “employer of choice” for job-seekers, measure retention rates before and after training, and survey employees on metrics such as, “I see a clear career path if I remain employed here” or, “I understand the criteria that my supervisor and company use to evaluate my performance and progress in the company.”

**Conclusion**

If you ask businesspeople to define what training is, chances are that most of them will say something similar to, “Training is a process that teaches people the skills they need to do their jobs better.” Of course, that is true. But if you then ask a series of deeper questions such as, “Wouldn’t you like your training to build a workforce that builds your brand, helps your company achieve its mission and communicates what you stand for to the world?” many of those businesspeople should reply, “Yes, we would!”

As you launch new training initiatives or refine those you already have, remember these larger issues. The better training can be aligned to business goals, the more successful a company can become.