



# So What Do They Think? Preliminary Results of a Qualitative Study of the Perceptions of Training

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# Agenda

- Background
- Literature review
- Methodology
- Preliminary results
- Possible conclusions

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# What do people *really* think about trainers?

- Concerns about status have driven trainers to:
  - Promote services under a variety of other names
  - Launch certification programs
  - Re-envision the value proposition
- Most of these actions intended to improve our status
- But no studies have empirically assessed perceptions, or tracked changes to it

# What the literature says about perceptions of training events

- Utility drives perceptions (Giangreco, Sebastiano & Peccei 2009, Velada & Caetano 2007)
- Good trainer performance does not compensate for poor courseware (Giangreco, Sebastiano & Peccei, 2009).
- Workers prefer concrete to theoretical material (Fragoulis, Valkanos, & Fkiriym, 2008).
- Workers have poor perceptions of training that seems to be a corporate sell-job (Dymock & McCarthy, 2006, Amoaka-Gyampah, 2004) though stressing the personal benefits raises perceptions (Dymock & McCarthy 2006).
- Limited satisfaction exists with Level 1 evaluations (Giangreco, Sebastiano & Peccei 2009, Sitzmann, Ely, Brown & Bauer 2010, and Pershing & Pershing 2001)

# What the Literature Says about Perceptions of the Training Function

- In some organizations, training takes an increasingly strategic role (Sambrook, 2001)
- But conflicting perceptions among workers and management:
  - Employees' perceptions of training depended on their roles (Dymock & McCarthy 2006, Amaoka-Gyampah 2004), education levels and occupations (Westbrook & Veale, 2001)
  - More experienced workers tended to see training as less strategic to their needs than less experienced workers (Coetzer, 2007)
  - Concerns exist about training employees who might leave the organization (Huque & Vyas 2008, Klein 2001)
- Disconnects exist between perceived training needs and training and services provided (Skinner, Saunders & Beresford 2004, Huque & Vyas 2008)
- Despite efforts to link training to financial benefits, the empirical evidence does not demonstrate such a link; it only links to HR measures (Tharenou, Saks & Moore, 2007)

# Methodology

- **Research questions:** what are the perceptions of training and what drives those perceptions among users of these services?
- **Participants:** 3 levels (when available) of staff in IT organizations in small, medium and large organizations, ideally 1 government agency, 1 nonprofit organization, and 1 corporation
- **Method:** Structured interviews
- **Analysis:**
  - Analyze responses by question for breadth of comments and their frequency
  - From this analysis, generate hypotheses about perceptions of training

# Preliminary Findings

- The dominant “brand name” for the work is Training
  - 2/3 of those responding
  - 1 felt training refers to classroom instruction
  - 1 used the term Training Provider
  - 1 mentioned learning
- Training is essential for current and future positions (dominant pattern)
  - 1 who felt otherwise is preparing for retirement



# Participants perceive high support for Training

- Workers on the whole rated themselves and their employers more supportive than their managers
- Many who felt managers were not supportive had had requests denied
- Weak pattern of participants who feel their employer isn't supportive; feel that funding and time for training is restricted and that managers are primarily focused on meeting an arbitrary goal (16 hours per year in one of the sites)

# The perceived value proposition of Training is improving or maintaining professional skills

- Weak patterns identified these benefits:
  - Building knowledge
  - Promoting development (researchers' term): networking, advancement
- Performance only mentioned by 2 participants

# **We have not yet completed the data collection, nor analyzed all responses**

- Thoughts about modes of training (at first glance, relevance is important):
  - Self-study tutorials
  - Classroom
  - Webinars
  - Conferences
- Thoughts about trainers (at first glance, expertise in subject matter taught and ability to apply it within learners' contexts seem key)

# We also need to investigate an important emerging pattern

- When participants receive an opportunity to go to Training, many do not receive a corresponding adjustment to their workload
- This is consistent with findings in the literature review

# Possible Conclusions

- The name Training seems to have *brand equity*
- Customers of Training perceive the value of training as developing individual skills rather than improving performance at other levels of the organization
- These workers believe that Training plays a key role in current and future jobs (will analyze by age)

# Possible Implications

More broadly, suggests that customers have a view of Training that is increasingly at odds with the views that workplace learning practitioners and researches have of ourselves.

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**Let's discuss this further.**

