

**Think about it...** Two learners arrive at the same program. One knows exactly what she wants to get out of it. The other arrives with just a vague idea of what the program is about. Who is likely to come away with greater value?

## Are You Prepared to Help Your Employee Make the Most from an Up-Coming Learning Opportunity?

Take the Self-Assessment now on page 5. **What's In It for You?**



Let's face it... training doesn't miraculously lead to results. Supervisors have a critical role in ensuring that investments in learning and development pay off.

You are reading this Toolkit because someone who reports to you is scheduled to attend a training and development program. It might be a program you recommended, one he or she asked to attend, or one mandated by the organization.

You might be enthusiastic about your direct report's attendance, skeptical about its value, or even irritated about the time it will consume.

*It doesn't matter.*

What does matter is: How will you make the most of it?

You benefit when your employees' performance improves – which is the reason for investing in training and development in the first place. Even if the direct report who is scheduled for training is already your top performer, he or she can still get better.

Think about the performance of the person who is scheduled for training. In the box below, list three things that, if he or she could do them faster, better, or more effectively, would make him or her even more valuable.

### Improvement Opportunities

**Instructions:** List three things that your direct report could do faster, better, or more effectively that would make him or her even more valuable to your department:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**People who discuss an upcoming program with their supervisors beforehand are much more likely to follow-through, transfer, and apply what they learned.**

As a supervisor, three key things will help you extract the maximum value from the training and development of your employees:

- Be more up-front.
- Be more engaged.
- Be more results-driven.

## 1. Be More Up-Front

Being more up-front means getting involved *before* the training starts. To optimize results, take the following actions up-front:

- Do your homework
- Meet with your direct report(s)
- Make your expectations clear
- Schedule follow-up and accountability

### Do Your Homework

Before the program begins, find out what it entails, what business purpose it serves, and what topics are covered. Scan the course material for the most valuable topics and exercises based on the performance improvement opportunities you identified for your direct report in the box above. In the “employee version” of the Toolkit (<http://www.umdnj.edu/hrweb/training/onlinelearningformats.html>), your direct report is encouraged to complete a similar worksheet and to schedule a meeting with you to discuss it. Comparing your worksheets is a great way to check for alignment around responsibilities, deliverables, development needs, and priorities for improvement. If your direct report has not already scheduled a pre-training meeting with you, schedule one now.

### Meet with Your Direct Report(s)

Meet with your direct report – ideally in person, but at least by phone – before the upcoming training. It doesn’t have to be a long meeting,

fifteen to twenty minutes should be enough, but it needs to happen if you want to get the most from the opportunity. Supervisors have their greatest impact on learning outcomes *before* the training program. Talking to your direct reports helps them focus, makes it clear that you place value on the investment, sets expectations for application and results, establishes a timeline for follow-through, and spells out the definition of success.

### Make Your Expectations Clear

Set your expectations high because expectations tend to be self-fulfilling prophecies; people rise (or fall) to the occasion. High expectations for performance produce greater effort than low (or no) expectations. One reason that supervisors are often disappointed with the results of training and development is that they themselves set the bar too low in terms of expected improvement.

Agree on objectives and the definition of success. Close the meeting by agreeing on deliverables, just as you would for any other business objective.

### Schedule Follow-Up and Accountability

Nothing else underscores your interest and intention to provide follow-up support and accountability as much as setting a firm date to discuss the program, what was learned, and your direct report’s plans for implementation.

## 2. Be More Engaged

If you show an active interest in your direct report’s development, so will they. They will devote greater effort to apply what they learned over a longer period. As a result, they will improve their performance faster and to a greater degree.

Continued on the next page.

## Just Ask

One of the most powerful and inexpensive performance tools a supervisor has is simply showing interest. What a supervisor attends to, his or her direct reports attend to. When you ask your direct reports about the program, what they learned, and what progress they are making, you send a strong message that you consider it to be important.

Showing interest does not require a lot of time, paperwork, or meetings. Brief conversations in the hall or cafeteria will have the desired effect. As stated previously, the most important time to “just ask” is before the training. The second most important time is immediately afterward. Why? Because knowledge is most fragile when it is new; the forgetting curve is steepest at the beginning. When you “just ask” about the training afterward, your employee has to retrieve and reprocess the experience, which facilitates its recall and application.

**A pre-training discussion is one of the single most important things you can do to be sure that both you and your direct report get value from the training.**

## Create Opportunities

The second critical way that supervisors facilitate performance improvement following training is by creating opportunities. As a supervisor, you exert control over workflow, assignments, and resources. Use this to create opportunities for your direct reports to continue to learn and to practice newly acquired skills and knowledge on the job.

## Free Up the Time to Learn

As a supervisor, you can increase the amount of learning that takes place by relieving your direct reports as much as possible from day-to-day responsibilities during training so that

they can truly concentrate on learning. Have someone else cover for them, take their calls, or otherwise handle as many of their responsibilities as possible. Adjust due dates of their projects if necessary and resist the urge to contact them yourself during the training unless absolutely necessary.

Encourage trainees themselves to stay focused. Discourage them from calling the office or checking voicemail at every break or trying to keep up-to-the-minute on e-mails, phone calls, etc.

## Provide Feedback and Encouragement

The last and most critical way for you to be more engaged is by providing coaching – feedback, encouragement, and advice – after the training.

Most employees want more feedback on their performance than they currently receive. A few minutes invested in providing feedback and encouragement on a regular basis will pay continuing returns in the form of increased commitment and performance.

Make it a point to “catch people doing something right” and remark on it.

## 3. Be More Results-Driven

The most important reason to invest in training and development is to improve work-relevant performance. Development objectives *are* business objectives and they should be managed as such. You will increase the return you get from training and development by managing post-training execution with the same results focus you use to manage the execution of other business processes.

A results-driven approach to learning transfer includes:

- Endorsing objectives
- Monitoring progress
- Assessing results
- Planning further improvement

**The real work begins when the coursework ends.****Endorsing Objectives**

Without your oversight or review, employees might end up going off to a training and development program, set their own goals, put them in their notebooks, and promptly forget about them. No wonder training often produces minimal impact.

Review and endorse or revise your direct report's goals for learning transfer just as you would for his or her other objectives. Make sure the goals reflect the best opportunities you agreed would improve performance.

**Monitoring Progress**

Periodic updates will allow you to monitor progress, recognize effort, and take corrective action if the expected improvement is not being achieved. Having and sticking to a schedule for monitoring progress is more important than the specific content or format of the updates. Require updates on learning objectives every two to four weeks for three to six months. Adjust the schedule as necessary for different kinds of training and goals. Continue the reporting process long and frequently enough for the new behaviors to become habit.

**Assessing Results**

Contrary to popular belief, the last day of class is not the finish line for training and development.

Participants have not truly completed the program until they have incorporated what was taught into their day-to-day work. The "final exam" for training is on-the-job improved performance.

Meet with your direct report soon after the training to define how success will be measured.

**Planning Further Improvement**

Development should be an on-going effort. Set the expectation for continuous improvement – that your direct report will sustain and then extend the progress made to date.

As a supervisor, you have a profound influence on the effectiveness of training. When it produces improved performance, you deserve much of the credit. If the time and money are wasted, you bear much of the responsibility.

Getting value from training and development requires co-investing some of your time to leverage your employee's efforts and the organization's resources. You will earn a return on your investment of time through improved performance, greater commitment, and enhanced capabilities of those who report to you.

**Contact Us at:**  
**University Human Resources,**  
**Learning & Professional**  
**Development**

**Additional Resources:**

**Toolkit Titled:** *Getting the Most from Training for Staff Toolkit*

**Reference:**

[Getting Your Money's Worth From Training and Development](#), by Andrew McK. Jefferson, Roy F.H., Pollack and Calhoun W. Wick

## Self-Assessment for Supervisors

*This survey will help you assess your readiness to help your direct report make the most of an upcoming learning opportunity.*

<b>Be More Upfront</b>	1	2	3	4	5	
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
I have thought about the most important things my direct report can do to improve his/her performance and prospects for the future.						
I have reviewed the course outline and other materials so that I have a good understanding of what will be covered.						
I have committed the time to provide any feedback or other input required of me before the program.						
I have discussed the upcoming learning event with my direct report and have made my expectations clear.						
I have scheduled a follow-up meeting with my direct report soon after the learning event to review what was learned and his/her objectives.						
<b>Be More Engaged</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
I have encouraged my direct report to concentrate on the learning program and offered help to minimize interruptions.						
I have asked my direct report to share his/her goals for applying the coursework and will take the time to review and discuss them.						
I will make it a point to ask my direct report periodically about his/her progress in applying what they learned.						
I will provide feedback and coaching to my direct report during the post-course period to help reinforce skill development.						
I will specifically create opportunities and stretch assignments for my direct report to practice and apply what they learned in the training.						

<b>Be More Results-Driven</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
I will meet with my direct report within a few days of their training and ask what they learned, what they plan to do, and what help they need.						
I will review my direct report's learning application objectives and provide thoughtful, balanced and specific feedback.						
I will require and review periodic updates of my direct report's progress in applying what he/she learned.						
I will schedule a meeting with my direct report several months after training to review what was accomplished and plan next steps.						
I will positively reward and recognize improvement but will make my disappointment and disapproval clear if the training is not used.						

**Interpreting Your Results** *Assign each answer you checked the score at the top of the column (1 to 5). Add up your points.*

Range	Interpretation
68-75	You are a role model for what supervisors need to do to ensure the organization gets its "money's worth" from training and development. You are making a good investment of your time and should get the maximum value from the initiatives.
60-68	You are doing more than most supervisors to ensure value from training and development. Nevertheless, you can improve your chances of getting your "money's worth" and helping your direct reports excel by reading the section of this Toolkit referenced below for your low-scoring areas.
50-60	Your direct reports may still benefit from the upcoming training and development, but because you have a significant number of low-scoring items, your department is likely to leave "money on the table" by not getting the full benefit possible. Refer to the relevant sections of the Toolkit from the table below.
< 50	You are probably wasting your time – and the organization's money – by sending your direct reports to training with inadequate support from you. Study the sections of this Toolkit referenced in the table below and/or consider rescheduling the training until you are better prepared to support the people who report to you.

**Improving Your Results** *To improve your chances of getting your "money's worth," review the pages recommended below for any part of the assessment in which you scored less than 20 points.*

Section	Toolkit Pages	Worksheets
Be More Upfront	p. 2	p. 1
Be More Engaged	p. 2-3	
Be More Results-Driven	p. 3-4	