



“Traction Control” – How to make your learning deliver

What you are about to read is an all too familiar occurrence for many organisations.

Ask yourself does this scenario sound familiar?

- You have undertaken a solid Training Needs Assessment to identify the training need
- You have engaged an expert (internal or external) to devise an appropriate solution
- The provider then delivers a quality intervention
- The team report a positive assessment

Now for the hard part: execution and making the change sustainable

Sometime down the track, you get the sense that the intended change is not delivering what it should and the wheels begin to spin. You may then wonder how do I get the power to the ground and convert the positive training experience into sustainable behaviour change that delivers results?

Maybe you need to employ some form of Traction Control.

The Problems experienced with poor traction

It seems that many learning providers and their clients place too much emphasis on the front end of the project when perhaps the overall success of the investment is dictated by what support and measures are put in place following the training event.

Whether it is a function of lack of foresight or willingness to extend the budget to support implementation, the costs can be considerable.

- Time delays in applying the learning can affect business performance – both top and bottom lines
- The Army stops marching in step and variances translate to inconsistent results
- With no consistency among the team, people revert naturally to what is comfortable and how they used to do it in the past
- Senior Management and Team Leaders if they don't act are seen to condone the slippage and their perceived leadership is affected
- The validity of future training investments then come into question
- Before too long, the intended return on the investment in learning has been dramatically diminished

Preparing for change

There are many reasons why the outcomes from training can be threatened. However a common view for creating positive behaviour change is that it starts when the student is ready.

- To be ready for change an individual requires awareness that there is alternative way to complete a task, apply a process or fulfill a function
- Secondly, they must develop a preparedness to move away from their current approach and embrace a better way
- Thirdly, knowledge that there are support measures in place will maintain momentum if the change becomes difficult
- And fourthly, momentum will be maintained if there is a reward for making the change permanent
- (Retribution or consequence for not changing may also be a motivator to adapt)

Getting these factors in order will assist with preparing the ground for improved traction.

How to turn on Traction Control

Below is a checklist that may be handy for you to avoid loss of traction:

Area of focus	✓	Suggested action
Program design		Ensure that sufficient attention is given to what needs to happen <u>after</u> the training has been delivered. This will generally require some resources being budgeted to drive execution: Follow up training, On the Job Coaching, External Coaching are the obvious ones to consider.
Mental Mouthfulls		It is generally prudent to run a series of learning instalments so that training is not a one off event. A stepped program allows for the construction of a strong foundation to then build on over subsequent sessions. Training is then seen as part of a continuous improvement initiative.
Overt Senior Management endorsement		The team will look for congruency and endorsement from their leaders. Strong communication of their sponsorship and demand for the change needs to pervade.
Line Management Immersion		It is no good for a Line Manager to expect their team to embrace a new skill or behaviour if they are not fully adept at it themselves. Therefore it is highly recommended that they also take the training either with their team or in a parallel, perhaps accelerated program. This program should naturally include a focus on how to sustain what the team are learning.
Develop Case Studies		It helps to be able to compare to good practice. By designing definitive examples and making these accessible via the intranet, learners can benchmark their efforts against what is seen as good practice.

Appoint Champions		As support to the case study initiative above, it might be good to also appoint individuals who display leading practice as Champions of that discipline. While basking in the glory of that title, they should also be charged with owning the knowledge, keeping it current, sharing new practice and supporting others who are emerging. The champion should come from the troops, not management ideally.
Access to Experts		While we suggest multiple chunks of learning work better than one off events, it is also advisable to offer access to the original training deliverer for coaching. This can be ad hoc through direct contact, or via structured reinforcement exercises made available on the web, intranet or extranet of the learning provider.
Mentors		Those with accumulated wisdom could be tapped to share some of that experience. Mentors usually come from a part of the business away from the immediate division in which the individual is attached.
Link to Coaching		The initial training should provide a bridge to reality where Line Managers can assess execution of new behaviours back on the job. This focus should be to catch people out <u>doing things right</u> , as well as identifying where improvement is still required.
You won't manage what you don't measure		An easy to wield measurement device should accompany the coaching program. This provides structure and objectivity to the feedback that a coach provides. Ideally the trainee can self assess with this tool and then compare their picture with what the coach sees on the job.
People do what is <i>Inspected</i> , not necessarily what is Expected		By writing the new way into an individual's KRA's, you now apply appropriate leverage to an individual to apply what is expected in their job role. Coaching can then refer to this and ultimately the Performance Review meeting will highlight how well the expected behaviour has been applied in reality.
Link to incentives		Wherever possible provide positive incentive to apply the new way. This may take the form of short term incentives or even tied to the criteria of annual awards.
Keep spreading the word		Take every opportunity to talk the new language: At Team Meetings, Management Presentations, Internal Newsletters, during Coaching Sessions, Induction, Awards Nights etc

In Summary

Traction Control should not be seen as an option on your training vehicle, it should be standard equipment. The success of your program and the ROI expectations demand sufficient focus and action on the things that follow the training event itself. It would be dangerous to expect full behaviour change to occur following a single intervention or training event. So don't make that mistake or you may find the thing that is slipping is your ability to develop your team into a High Performing Sales Team.

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