

White Paper – Learning and Development

Fire up your people and freshen up their thinking

That's how we see learning and development – really good learning and development. It's really good if it hits the spot, is directly relevant to people, challenges their thinking and fires them up to take action and change their behaviour.

How people learn

It's useful to re-cap some basic learning principles. First of all, most experts agree that we learn by doing. Some argue that we learn 10% of what we read, 15% of what we hear and 75% of what we experience.

Certainly people learn a great deal on the job. They just give it a go and learn the hard way. We've certainly come across many new managers who have undergone a baptism of fire in their new role. They are then sent on leadership training and exclaim: "I wish I'd been sent on this a year ago!"

But they've learned by doing and having to cope. We also learn through adversity. What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger is undoubtedly true. These adverse experiences can be inside or outside of work. Redundancy, divorce, grief and tragedy all reveal aspects of ourselves to us and often build lasting resilience.

We're also inspired by others. Some are distance figures. For me, my schoolgirl hero was Jimmy Reid, a Scottish trade union leader, who influenced and inspired me. Coaches, mentors, family members, managers and colleagues are all important role models who influence our thinking and behaviour.

We certainly know the value of effective one-on-one coaching. You can question, challenge, advise and gain commitments to specific actions. And it works, particularly if you add the homework element in. That means agreeing specific actions people will then take, however challenging they may be.

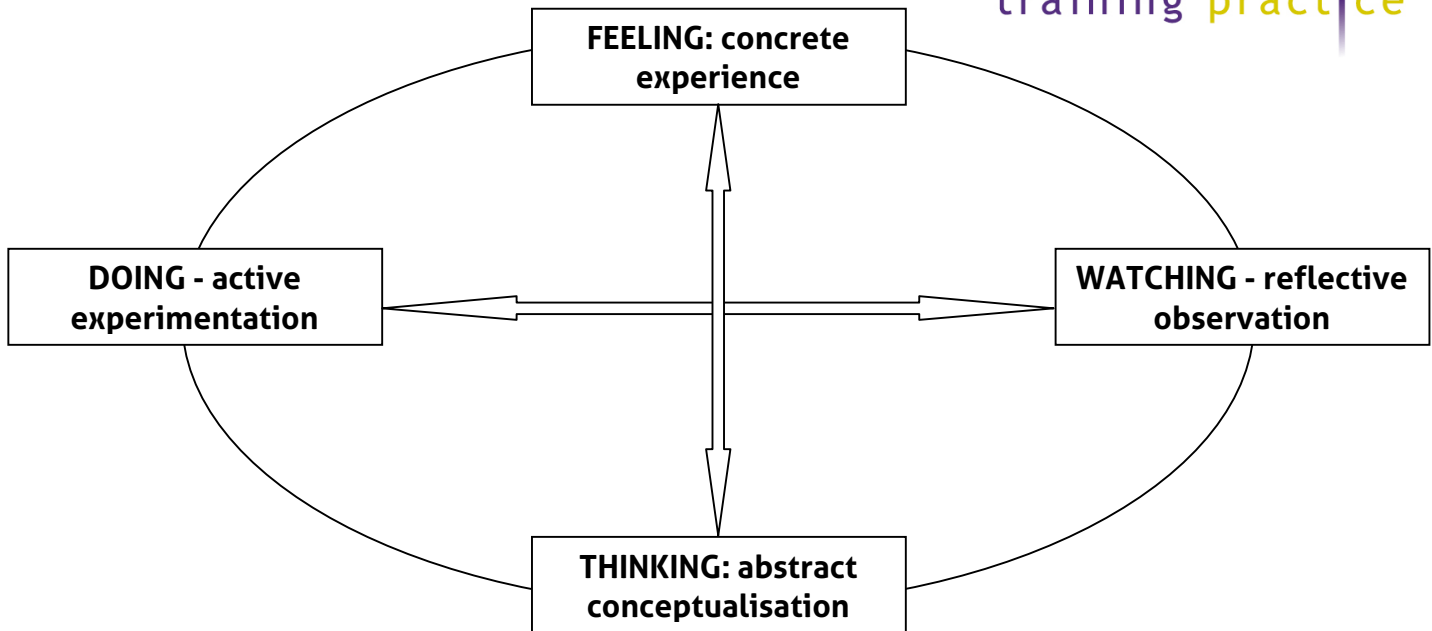
Essentially coaching is a conversation with a specific purpose. Done well, it gets results.

So what about training?

A review of learning methods

Traditionally learning and development people like us talk about the different ways people learn. Some are visual (seeing), some audio (hearing) and some kinesthetic (doing).

Another way of cutting the cake is to think about Kolb's learning styles:



Broadly speaking, Kolb maintains we tend to get into a new experience by either watching or doing. Then we need to make sense of what we've seen or done. That means we either think it through or have an emotional response to it.

Honey and Mumford developed these ideas a stage further by coming up with four learning styles:

- **Activists:** people who like to learn by doing and want an immediate learning experience
- **Reflectors:** people who like to stand back, reflect and ponder what they're learning about
- **Theorists:** people who think things through in logical steps and are rationally objective about what they're learning
- **Pragmatists:** people who like new ideas and trying them out practically

So what?

Well, when we're devising a training programme, we develop activities that fit with as many different learning styles as possible. Often, with the best will in the world, you don't know people's learning style before you meet them in a training room. So we devise a wide variety of training exercises that will fit different styles.

Then of course, when we're training, we have to be adaptable and change activities as we realise certain approaches will work better than others.

Learning or behaviour change?

Learning styles and approaches are all well and good, but is it the real guts of what we're about? Sometimes yes. When we're trying to get people to understand how Cabinet takes a decision or what Select Committees do, it's not because the people we're training will ever sit in Cabinet or be a member of a Select Committee.

We want them to have a better understanding of how things work, so they can make more sense of their world.

But on far more occasions we want people to not just learn, but to change what they do.

So, more often than not, we refer to Kirkpatrick's evaluation model. It's simple, but useful. He has four levels. We're often after level three changes.

LEVEL	WHAT IT MEANS	HOW YOU DO IT
One	Immediate reactions to the training - what people felt about the learning experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smile sheets at the end of a programme • Verbal reactions
Two	Measure of the increase in knowledge or understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre and post training assessments • Observations and interviews
Three	Extent of behaviour change applied back on the job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre and post training evaluations • 360 degree evaluations • Observations and interviews
Four	The business improvements that resulted from the behaviour changes. This often means you can show a return on investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific performance measures that are often part of day to day business monitoring and performance management

The issue with any model like this, is that it assumes a linear approach to learning and measurement. It's easy to measure the effect of training when it is isolated and is designed to bring about a direct and easily measurable business result. For example, an organisation may spend \$10,000 on sales training. As a direct result the sale team sells 50% more products than previously and generates \$30,000 more profit. Sounds easy.

The problem is life is often far from this straightforward; instead it's curved and messy.

For example, how do you measure the increase in people's management effectiveness? There are all sorts of factors (other than the training) that influence how managers manage. A person's manager, the climate in the organisation, how quickly they learn, the opportunities they have to put new ideas into practice and their organisation's reward system are all obvious factors. That's why we developed our Training Plus model. It puts learning and development into a bigger context, exactly where it needs to be.

First of all we ask about strategic direction. Where is the organisation going? What capabilities does it need to achieve its strategy?

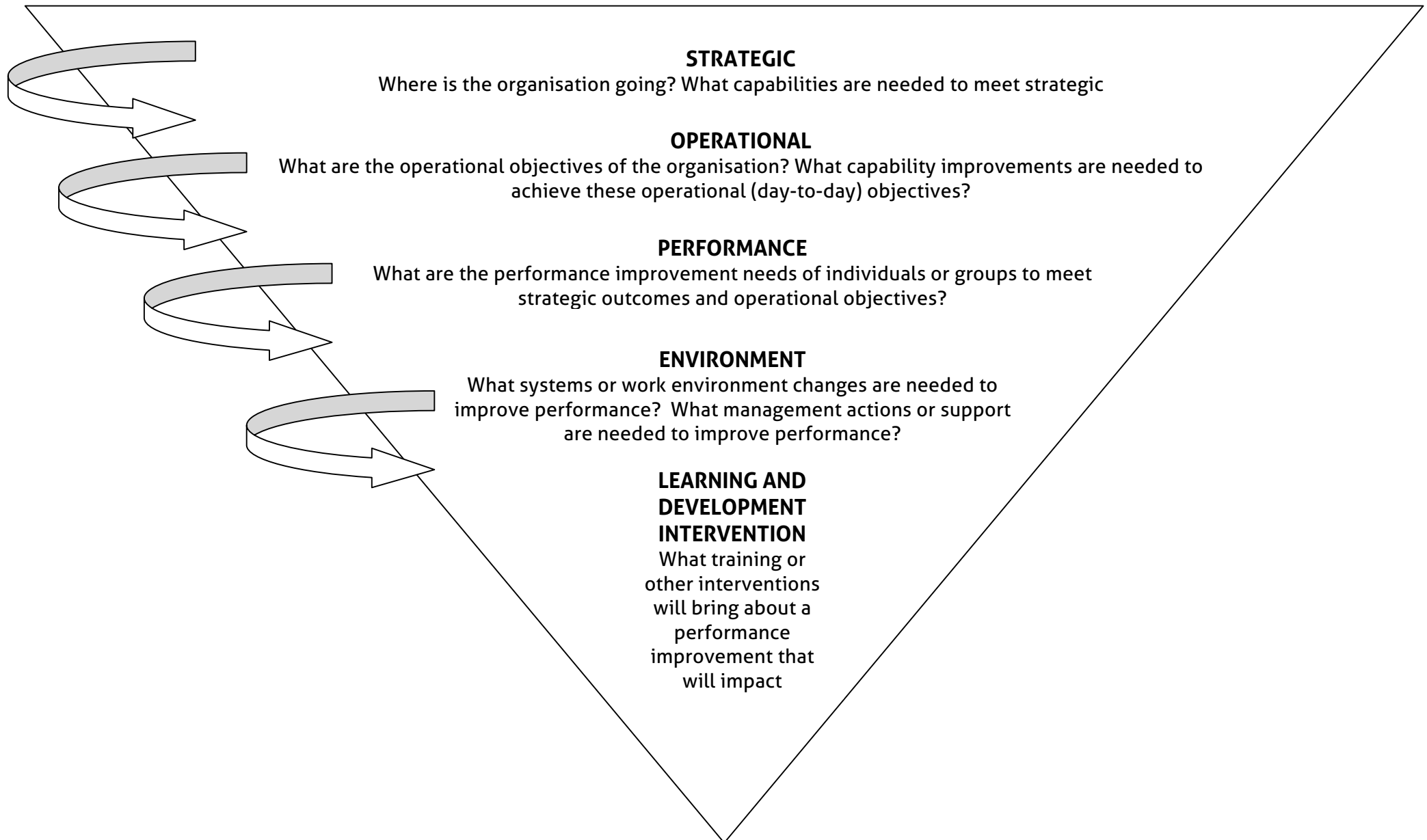
Next, it's important to get to grips with operational capability needs. After that, we get to grips with performance gaps? Who needs to be doing what more effectively and to what standard?

After that, it's vital we understand the environment people who we're training are working in. Ideally, they are getting support from their managers and are able to put what they are learning into practice straight away.

Having got all of these elements clear, we can then plan the best learning and development intervention. That may be training, coaching, blended learning, on the job learning, shadowing etc – whatever works.

See the Training Plus model on the next page.

The Training Plus model



When we train: the art of facilitation

When you're trying to change people's behaviour, so many factors come into play. The social marketers know they have to ask the question: what's in it for the person whose behaviour you want to change? Shock tactics don't always work. The persuaders know that emotional appeals and starting from where people are at, are both important.

So how do we incorporate these ideas into facilitating learning and development?

First of all, if you're going to move people towards behaviour change, you need to engage them and build a sound relationship with them. The facilitation process is often far more important than the content. We want people to go away from a training session knowing what actions they need to take and feeling confident and able to take them. And for that to happen, they need to feel emotionally fired up and know what's in it for them. Often this may involve a shift in their identity and/or overcoming a specific fear or anxiety.

For example, we often mention the imposter syndrome at the start of management programmes. When we do, you can feel the release of tension in the room as people realise they're not the only ones who feel like imposters. We've mentioned the real elephant in the room that is dominating their thinking.

David Rock talks about the 'ah-ha' moment, ie that moment when people having recognised a dilemma and reflected on it, then reach a moment of insight and illumination. They get it. A new thought or idea has meshed with their existing thinking and produced that special moment. The art is then to translate this moment into motivation and action.

So, people leave the training room fired up and ready to do battle. What happens next? The cold reality of the real world hits them and they are back at work with their manager, same old problems and people. In some cases they have to work hard to overcome them all to bring about behaviour change.

Remember Jenny Craig. Why do people join, pay good money and try to lose weight with the support of others? Because it's hard on your own. Good training is far, far, far more effective if it's backed up in the workplace and part of the whole Training Plus model.

That's why partnership between us and organisations we're working with is crucial. We all need to be on the same wavelength to achieve Kirkpatrick's level three behaviour change.