

Key Leadership Behaviors That Skyrocket ROI on Training Programs

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Being profitable and getting the most bang for your buck from training dollars are top priorities for every company. Training for training's sake is not a good use of resources. It's not just choosing the right learning and development initiatives that matters; it's what leaders do before, during, and after the training session that makes the biggest difference.

Over the past several years, we've seen a positive trend in companies choosing to invest in learning and development opportunities because there is more competition for top talent. Investing in people's professional development is one way that high-performing organizations differentiate themselves from industry peers and demonstrate that they value employees.

With training becoming more of a priority, budgets and expenditures have been steadily growing. In 2015, **\$350 billion dollars** were spent on learning and development. TrainingIndustry.com estimated that the outsourced market for training services in North America alone was approximately \$67.2 billion dollars, an average of 42 percent of training and development budgets.

While investing dollars up front for training when budgets are tight can be seen as a negotiable perk, in the long run training prepares employees to achieve corporate goals faster with less expense to the organization.

The return on investment (ROI) of training programs can be measured in many different ways. It is widely known that investing in professional development is beneficial for keeping employee morale high. But offering relevant, timely training also positively affects organizations' bottom lines. Companies that invest in their people boast significantly less voluntary turnover than industry peers. Turnover is extremely costly to companies, not only in terms of lost productivity and institutional knowledge, but also because replacing a lost employee can **cost up to 400 percent of their salary**.

Given all of these statistics, it's surprising that more leaders don't put forth the extra effort to help make learning stick. Many organizations treat training programs like a check-the-box event and are then disappointed when the ROI and the sustainability of results doesn't match their investment.



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Here are three key behaviors leaders should implement to maximize the ROI of learning and development efforts in their organizations:

Ensure Internal Support From the Leadership Team

Training programs need to be a strategic priority that are tied to company goals and values to be maximally effective.

Leaders should be involved in the identification of challenges and ideal outcomes, and should also be visibly engaged in training efforts by promoting, facilitating, and even attending programs themselves to build organizational buy-in to the value of the learning. Having a

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senior leader champion the effort and be ultimately responsible for the outcome is incredibly important to driving continued implementation after the training event is complete.

Create a Strategic Communication Plan to Support the Training Rollout

It takes more than a memo announcing where and when employees need to show up for training to get people excited. Leaders who work with their training consultants to intentionally set the stage for a training program rollout with thoughtful and engaging communications will reap major rewards. Showing participants the benefits of taking the time and effort to attend will help learners buy into the program, ensuring continued interaction between training providers and internal leaders to make any necessary adjustments for longer-term initiatives.

Implement an Ongoing Learning Reinforcement Plan

Learners forget 90 percent of what they've learned in just two weeks unless it is reinforced; that's an expensive proposition! Corporate sponsors should work closely with training consultants to ensure that one to three key items are identified, reinforced, and executed immediately following the training program. Taking this extra step dramatically increases learning retention and applicable skills transfer into the organization.

Learning and development initiatives may still be viewed as costs that are nice to have compared with other "essential" business expenditures. However, leveraging training as a way to engage and retain top organizational talent is critical to allowing businesses to adapt quickly to ever-changing goals and objectives. As a bonus, employees who feel valued and supported by leadership are happier and more productive contributors.

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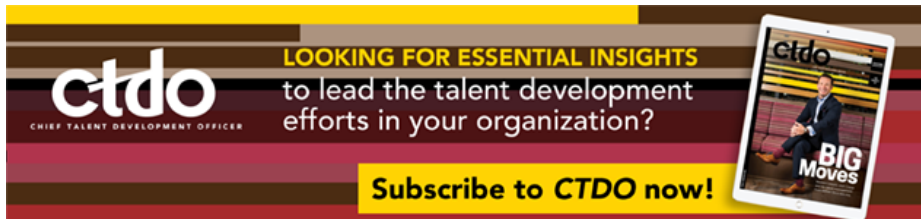
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Jen Roberts is the president and founder of [Difference Consulting](#), which specializes in helping companies strategically build, develop, and leverage the unique talents of their own people and teams internally through executive coaching and proprietary leadership development programs. She works with executive teams and senior-level leaders to change how they think about work so they can increase enjoyment and most effectively use their time and energy to get better results, faster, with less stress. The result is more authentic and self-aware leaders who communicate with greater impact and know how to create fun, engaged, and productive work environments built on trust and collaboration.

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