

# Evaluation of an Innovative Leadership Development Program for Not-for-Profit Services of a Employer's Association in Thailand

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**Abstract** - Evaluation of an Innovative Leadership Development Program for not-for-profit Services of a Employer's Association in Thailand this applied research was designed to determine the effectiveness of employee leadership training at a Employer' Association of Management Technology Management Development. The goal of the study was to provide leaders at the Employer' Association of Management Technology Management Development with evaluative information using the Kirkpatrick 4 – level evaluation model regarding the effectiveness of a new leadership – development training program starting at the Employer's Association in Thailand for supervisors and managers Literature supports the need for program evaluation but employee training programs tend to be superficially evaluated, leaving executives without sufficient data to decide if the training was effective and if so, to what extent the organization benefits from the investment. If structured well, this study would serve us a model for future training evaluation at this Employer's Association. The evaluation was based on Kirkpatrick's 4 levels of evaluation; training participants were surveyed to determine reaction, learning, and behavior. Survey responses were analyzed to determine Level 4, results. Participants in the study were Employer's Association managers and supervisors with 3 or more subordinates. Study results showed overall satisfaction with training by participants evidence of learning and training behaviors observed on the job by supervisors and

direct reports of participants, but lack of evidence to confirm the training meets executive stakeholder expectation.

**Keywords** - Employer's Association, Evaluation, Innovative Leadership Development Program, Not-for-Profit Services

## I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Employer's Association in Thailand is a private not-for-profit institution of Human and Social Development. The Employer's Association was chartered in 2004, founded by educators who had innovative ideas for providing training opportunities to poor performers the members of Employers' Association in Bangkok area.

The launched a mandatory leadership – development training program for all supervisor who have three or more direct reports. At the time the study commenced, the Employer's Association in Thailand was in its 15th year and under new leadership with a new vision and a 10 – year business plan (beginning in 2010) to achieve the goal of becoming recognized as a premier institution by 2020. Essential to this effort was a presidential indicative to develop talent from within the organization through training. The expectation of this training is to develop future organizational leaders as well as mobilize employees in support of the organizational vision.

The research problem. As the program was new for the Employer's Association. Executives wanted to know whether the training was effective. To determine overall

program effectiveness Executives required a more extensive assessment, including observations of training participants to determine whether they were actually applying the new knowledge on the job. In addition Executives wanted to know whether training leadership personnel resulted in measureable impact in support of the Employer's Association's vision, mission, values, and goals. According to Chong (2005), "Decisions should be made based on careful observations and a clear understanding of the relevant factors involved, as well as the goals of the learning. As is case with formal training program, results should be carefully evaluated".

## **II. OBJECTIVE OF THE EVALUATION**

The Objective of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a new leadership training program at a private, not-for-profit Employer's Association. Effectiveness was measured by the learning outcores self-reported by the participants as well as by observed participant behavioral changes on the job as reported by the participants' managers, supervisors, and subordinates (here termed direct reports). Other measureable impacts were to include reduced employee turnover, increased engagement, and fewer employee – relations issues. Organizational impacts were to be measured in terms of shorter timelines for decisions and projects as well as faster progression toward the Employer's Association's priorities and overall vision.

Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation provided the framework of data collection. The four levels are level 1: reaction, level 2: learning, level 3: behavior, and level 4: results. (D. Kirkpatrick, & Kirkpatrick, 2006). To evaluate reaction participants were asked to complete a post session survey, quantifiable by degree of satisfaction. Levels 2 and 3 were measured by pre – and post session knowledge testing. Level 3, behavior, included interviewing the participants and

their managers to determine if learning was indeed applied in the workplace. Results, Level 4, was to include an assessment of workplace metrics such as engagement, turnover, and other such measurements compared against a baseline assessment to determine whether training could be correlated to improvement in individual and organizational performance.

## **III. METHODOLOGY**

Training Program was evaluated at a Employer's Association headquartered in Bangkok, Thailand. The Employer's Association leadership – development training is five competency – based modules intended to provide participants with enough knowledge and overview of skills to help them competently perform in their roles and encourage competency form the individuals reporting directly to them (direct reports). The five modules are: 1) Communication in the Workplace, 2) Managing Conflict and Change, 3) Performance Management, 4) Project Management and Measurement, and 5) Visioning and Planning.

The target population for this study included all participants in the leadership – development training program at the study Employer's Association. This population included supervisors, managers, directors, and every level of Executives who managed the activities of three or more direct reports at the Employer's Association. Employer's Association supervisors, when the leadership – development training program was initiated, 407 from all Participants, totally 680, were accidentally sampled as having three or more direct reports and thus were required to participate. Supervisors who had fewer than three direct reports were required to attend training after the first group completed training.

Training participants were surveyed for knowledge pre – and post intervention. They were also surveyed post intervention regarding the level of their satisfaction

with, and reaction to, the training. They were surveyed to assess meeting of executive expectations post intervention as well.

Participants in the evaluation of the leadership – development training program included training participants, supervisors of the training participants, and the direct reports of the training participants. A 360 – degree approach to the evaluation involving surveying managers and subordinates of training participants, attempted to overcome perception distortion by allowing for a variety of sources (D. Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2007).

#### IV. EVALUATION MODEL

Kirkpatrick's four levels are designed as a sequence of ways to evaluate training programs. The four levels of Kirkpatrick's evaluation model are as follows:

1) **Reaction** - what participants thought and felt about the training (satisfaction).

2) **Learning** - the resulting increase in knowledge and/or skills, and change in attitudes. This evaluation occurs during the training in the form of either a knowledge test.

3) **Behavior** - transfer of knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes from classroom to the job (change in job behavior due to training program). This evaluation occurs 3-6 months post training while the trainee is performing the job. Evaluation usually occurs through observation.

4) **Results** - the final results that occurred because of attendance and participation in a training program (can be monetary, performance-based, etc).

The evaluation framework model used for this study was Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation (see Fig. 1). The four levels are reaction, learning, behavior, and results.

Level 1: Reaction	Level 2: Learning	Level 3: Behavior	Level 4: Result
<u>Assess Satisfaction</u> with 1. Content for Supervisors 2. Perceived Competency of Facilitator 3. Length of time devoted to the Training 4. Helpful of Materials Provided	<u>Measure</u> • Knowledge Assessment	<u>Survey</u> 1. Supervisor 2. Immediate Report	<u>Assess workplace</u> metrics to determine change towards expected outcomes

Fig. 1 Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Evaluation Grouped by Individual or Organization Influence.

#### V. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Leadership training participants were surveyed at different times in the training cycle in accordance with the first of Kirkpatrick's four levels evaluation.

**Level 1: Reaction**, was captured by survey of participants' overall reaction to the training immediately upon completion of the individual.

**Level 2: Learning**, was captured by pre – and post intervention knowledge testing at intervals of 1 week prior to the training and 1 week after the training. Survey items were structured as multiple choice or true – false, based on the content of each training module. Testing before training could help facilitators understand the level of knowledge participants had prior to entering training and therefore update the content accordingly to information that would be considered new. In addition, testing 1 week after the intervention could help identify what new information was understood, as well as what information actually stayed with participants into the near future.

**Level 3: Behavior**, was measured through surveys administered to participants' supervisors and subordinates several weeks after completion of the entire curriculum of training. The survey included Likert – scale rated questions intended to determine if participants were displaying new or increased behaviors on the job post intervention.

**Level 4: Overall Results**, was intended to compare organizational baseline data obtained prior to the initiation of training, such as data from employee engagement surveys and employee data, to post intervention data.

**Design** - Survey items for Level 1 and 3 were based on 5 – point Likert – scale ratings intended to measure reaction to content, relevance to participants' job, facilitator effectiveness, and materials provided. Survey items associated with Level 2 included multiple – choice and true – false questions. Responses were intended to be in the form of quantifiable metrics for ease of comparison for statistical analyses.

**Data Collection Procedures** - The survey application was used for collecting Levels 1 – 3 survey data from training and non training participants (such as supervisors and direct reports of training participants). Level 4 data were to be collected from institutional data provided from association's records. Employee engagement data would be provided from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Other employee metrics, such as data regarding turnover rates and the number and nature of employee relations issues, would be provided by the Office of Human Resources.

**Data Analysis** - Nonparametric analysis was used for comparisons of Likert – scale questions. Chi – square tests of independence were used for a majority of the statistical comparisons. For each question on the pre – and post training learning surveys, the number of correct and incorrect responses for all participants was recorded in a 2 × 2 table.

## **VI. FINDINGS IN RELATION TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

**Research Question1:** Referring back to guidance provided by D. Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick's Kirkpatrick (2007) to “start with the end in mind”, the first research question identified the outcomes executive stakeholders were anticipating as a result of supervisors

participating in the leadership – development program. Through in – person interviewing of the executive stakeholders, themes emerged of individual development and performance improvement, increased employee engagement, and organizational agility.

**Research Question2:** To determine whether participants had favorable reactions to the training sessions, reaction surveys were administered via survey at the end of each training session. On average, 86% of training participants found the content of the training modules important overall, and the same percentage found the content important to supervisors, responding with survey choices very satisfied or satisfied.

**Research Question3:** Level 2 of the study measured training participants' retention of desired learning outcome as specified by the training – module content, through pre – and post-training surveys. Overall, learning did occur, and chi – square tests corroborated that learning occurred. However, only three of the five modules resulted in statistically significant demonstrated learning. Participants did not seem to learn significantly as a result of attending the Communication in the Workplace and Visioning and Planning modules.

**Research Question4:** Level 3, behavioral observation, was ascertain whether participants could be observed by their managers and direct reports applying learning outcomes in the work environment. On average, direct reports reported positive observation of training behaviors, at 80%, whereas supervisors reported observing these behaviors at 56%. Compared to the training participants' satisfaction rate of 86%, there would seem to be a discrepancy between satisfaction with the training and the ability to demonstrate the learned behavior on the job.

Chi – square testing with the survey results module by module determined that significantly more direct reports observed behaviors than the participants' supervisors

in all modules. Additionally, significantly more training participants reacted positively to the training than supervisors who observed an increase in behaviors, which is to say that participants' self-perceptions were greater than the supervisors' assessments. D. Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2007) cautioned, however, that behavioral observations are subject to bias, and therefore reliability may be in question. Training participants might have overstated their behavioral changes, direct reports might be biased (for or against), and supervisors might not spend enough time in the presence of the training participant to observe these specific behaviors. Given the variables of reliability and availability, D. Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2007) offered. "This is why more than one source should be used".

However, only in the Performance Management, Project Management and Measurement, and Managing Conflict and Change modules did significantly more training participants reactive positively to the training than their direct reports who observed an increase in behaviors. In these modules, the self-perception of competence was greater than direct reports' assessments of observed behavior. For Communication in the Workplace, results were not significant, as the distribution of training participants who reacted positively to the training was statistically equal to the distribution of their direct reports who observed and increase in behaviors. In this regard, self-perception was equal to direct-report assessment. Results of the Visioning and Planning module yielded significantly fewer training participants who reacted positively to the training than their direct reports who observed an increase in behaviors. In this case, self-perception was less than the assessment of direct reports.

**Research Question5:** The fifth and final research question of whether training was having a measureable impact on the organization and meeting stakeholder expectations proved more difficult to

determine. Obtained through interviews of the executive stakeholders three themes of expectations emerged: 1) employee engagement, 2) individual development, and 3) organization agility, but lack of evidence to confirm the training meets executive stakeholder expectation.

## VII. IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study suggest that the training itself is the effective at the individual level but not at the organizational level, as anticipated by the executive stakeholders. Individuals are largely satisfied with the content and its importance to them in their role as a supervisor. Three of the five modules showed evidence of learning Direct reports and supervisors of the training participants have observed on-the-job behaviors to some degree, direct reports more than supervisors. However, executive expectations are difficult to the back to the training, confirmed by participants' split perceptions of two of the outcomes. The data imply that the choice of facilitators for the training, venues and delivery methods are effective, but the content and expectations may be incongruent.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Cohen (2005) suggested that the use of control groups is "required to effectively assess the impact of training interventions". Future iterations of the process should include control groups. Once the entire population of leaders at the Employer's Association is trained, control groups will be difficult to gather at a given point in time. An answer to that might be the use of non supervisors as a control group as valuable alternative, especially as a means for identifying potential or emerging leaders within the nonsupervisory ranks.

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same fashion as the case of Footnotes.)**

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