



## Training in the IT and technology industry

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### Abstract

Requests for training are often presented something like this.

**“Hi! We are missing our quotas and we need help. We are really busy but I think we can manage a two-day training event covering account management and negotiation... and maybe something on proposal writing?”**

Such requests usually mask underlying problems which may range from product competitiveness to personnel issues, marketing to selling skills. Only one thing is for sure; it is most unlikely that a few hours in the classroom alone will result in improved sales.

So how should the IT company executive, corporate training manager or training provider evaluate requests for training to ensure they result in business benefit?

## Introduction

The purpose of training in commercial IT and technology organisations is to achieve business benefit. Whether we train people to do their current job better or to enable them to take on different and greater responsibilities in the future, in the commercial world there must be a positive business outcome, or the training is ultimately valueless.

To achieve benefit we want people to change the way they work. The problem is that significant behaviour change rarely results solely from attending a training course. Research shows an average retention rate of 5% of material taught by lecture alone. There will be many other things that have to happen if a change is to stick. Reinforcement of learning is one prerequisite, and some means of inspection is highly likely to be necessary. In the broader context motivation, support systems, and operational management methods are just a few of the others. Unless we have a very clear idea of exactly what change is required, and a realistic plan to make it happen, the chance of real success is small.

The truth is that most money spent on training is wasted.

So, when faced with a training request it pays huge dividends to view the request as a signal that something needs to change, and invest a little time ensuring that the required change is well understood.

The four key questions to ask are: “What will be the benefit from this change?”; “What exactly are the changed behaviours needed to achieve the benefit?”; “Is anything else required to enable the change?”; “How will we know when the change has occurred?”.

When the outcome is clearly defined, we can then start to devise a realistic strategy to make the required change.

For example, in one software company a Sales Director was asked to provide training in qualification methods after a rise in competitive losses and “no jobs” was noticed. Instead of treating the request at face value he asked for an investigation and discovered that, rather than poor qualification in itself, the problem lay in the failure to provide new qualification criteria following the introduction of new



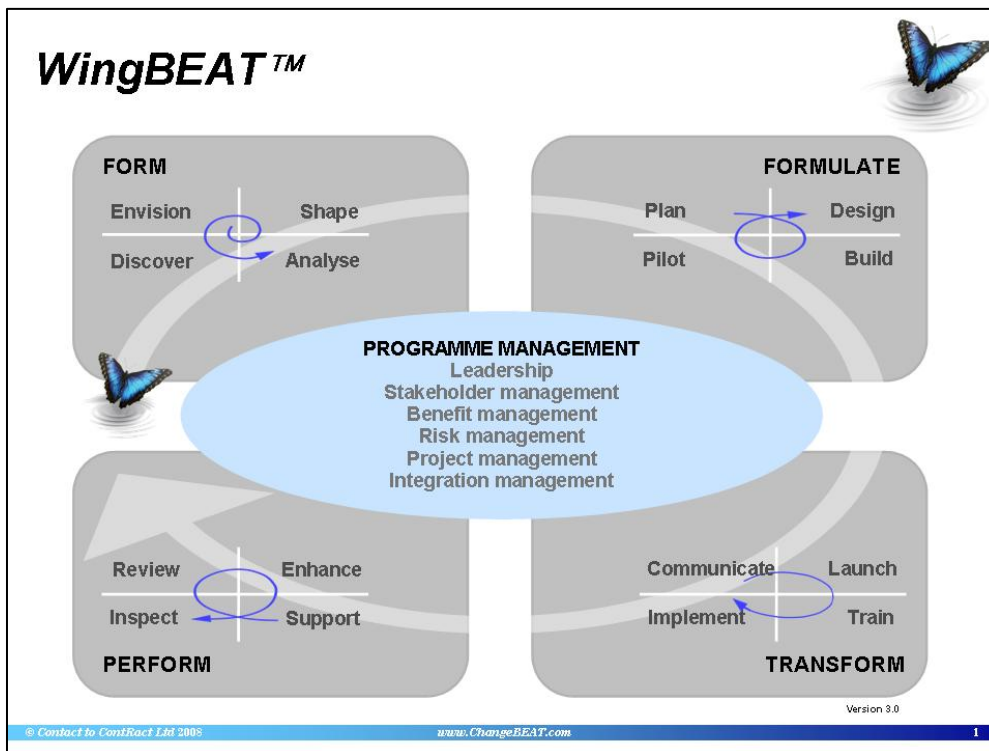
offerings. However, the review also showed deficiencies in the prospecting approach and in the way leads, once qualified, were being followed up. Training in qualification alone could make no difference to behaviour or business results, so the company launched a programme (including the requested training) to design, develop and roll out a new prospecting, qualification and bid planning system with support tools and an enhanced management review process. This led to measurable improvements in the conversion rate and sales volumes.

The key point is that, faced with a training request, it is always worthwhile thinking through the implications and formulating and executing a change programme.

Our methodology for this is *WingBEAT™*.

In this paper we explain how *ChangeBEAT* uses our *WingBEAT* methodology to develop and deliver training programmes designed to ensure predictable and measurable skill and behaviour changes, as part of a wider change programme.

### Introducing *WingBEAT™*



*WingBEAT* is *ChangeBEAT's* change methodology, and consists of

1. A four-phase methodology **Form, Formulate, Transform, Perform (FFTP)**, that takes an expression of a desire for a change, to the point where it is embedded into the company's operation, and the anticipated benefits are delivered.
2. **Programme management** activities to ensure the "big picture" success of the programme.
3. The **ToolSET** that supports each step of the methodology and the programme management activities.

## Training development

The remainder of this paper explains how we apply *WingBEAT* to build a training programme in support of an overall change programme. At first glance this may look overblown for "merely" designing a series of courses. However, our purpose is to achieve change at a number of levels, ultimately to the business itself.

### Form

In the first phase, **Form**, an expressed "wish" for a business transformation or improvement is developed into a definition of a change and training programme that will achieve the change.

### Analyse

In the **Form** phase, it is important to analyse the situation that presents itself as a training need. There are almost always other problems that need to be addressed as part of the change programme. Instances abound where not addressing the whole problem renders training ineffective and even counter-productive. For instance, an apparent need to train drivers may actually turn out to be a need for better road signs or car control layout, or even all three!

### Vision and goal setting

In order to engage people in the programme, it is important to create a clearly understood vision, for instance "Make driving safer", and it is also important to clearly define the business issues and goals that the training is aimed at, and what change the training must make happen (for instance, "Accidents cost the



public services £25m per year. Our goal is to reduce the cost of accidents by 25%.”).

A useful and widely used model was developed by D. L. Kirkpatrick in the late 1950s. Kirkpatrick’s system has four levels of evaluation. As one progresses from level 1 through to 4, the capability to link workplace education to organisational results improves.

Level	What the level measures	
1	Response	Was the employee satisfied with the workplace education and did employee complete it?
2	Learning	What did the employee learn from the workplace education programme?
3	Performance	How did the workplace education programme affect employee performance?
4	Results	Did changes in employee performance attributable to workplace education affect organisational performance?

This model points out clearly that we need to set our goals at these four levels, linking our change and training efforts at level 4, to our business scorecard and financial results.

### Champions

A third important factor in the **Form** phase is the recruitment of local user “champions” to help define the need. These should be experienced practitioners, respected by their peers, who will play a key role in ensuring that the training and change programmes are accepted by the users.

### Formulate

In this phase we do the detailed planning and design of the programme, and the materials required to support the change programme are developed and reviewed.

### Introducing *TrainingMAPPER*

*TrainingMAPPER* is one of the *WingBEAT* tools, a process that can be used to develop a training programme. It comprises the steps described next.



### **Shaping – creating the high-level design**

First we develop course objectives and an outline of the modules, how the training will flow, the instruction techniques and media to be used, and the plan for coaching and reinforcement.

### **Blended learning analysis**

A large range of training forms is available. Each has strengths and weaknesses, so a key task for the courseware designer is to get the right blend, given constraints of time and cost.

### **Media analysis – identifying appropriate delivery methods**

The point of training is to train, so the selection of the medium should be driven by the need to effectively communicate the learning points, not the use of exciting tools or technology.

### **Design – finalising and reviewing the design**

Within *TrainingMAPPER* we apply the following courseware design principles

- Specific – the design is rigorously tested against the agreed Kirkpatrick measurements
- Architected – all the elements chosen for the training programme blend have a consistent look and feel and fit together
- Flexible – our design enables us to “depart from the script” if this is required for learning.

### **Development – creating the material**

Within *TrainingMAPPER* we apply the following courseware development principles

- Priming – preparatory exercises/reading
- Chunking – the material is delivered in “chunks” to enable effective assimilation
- SAVI – our classroom material uses the SAVI principle which reflects the four ways people learn
- The four Ps of delivery – Prepare (5%), Present (20-30%), Practice (60-70%), Perform (5%)
- Reviews – regularly reviewing, asking for feedback and verifying that people have understood.



### Review and pilot

The user champions should review this design before it is used to create the training materials. The training should then be run as a pilot and any feedback incorporated before a full roll-out.

### Programme management

A further important consideration in the **Formulate** stage is programme management, the overall coordination of all the training and change activities.

### Transform

The **Transform** phase comprises the execution and roll-out of the change programme, including training, distribution of the support materials and other implementation activities.

### Launch

The **Transform** phase starts with the launch of the training programme. At this point good positive communication is a crucial “marketing communications activity” to get the message across to all of those who will be affected. First the “messages” must be clearly defined, and then a strategy put in place to get the message across in the best possible way.

### Training events

The moment of truth for all our planning, design and development efforts is in the training event. To ensure maximum return on this and the participants’ investment, we apply these adult learning principles

- Identifying objectives for participants as the course begins
- Telling participants explicitly how the training will be useful to them on the job
- Actively involving participants and serving as facilitators for them
- Drawing out participants’ experience and relevant to the topic
- Treating participants as equals in experience and knowledge and allowing them to voice their opinions freely in class.



## Perform

By applying the principles above, we can expect a learner to leave a training event with a good understanding of the material and the benefit that should come from applying it in the current job role and longer term. But has anything been achieved and what more must be done to gain the benefit from the investment?

Post-implementation support, inspection, review and improvement will be necessary to embed (or institutionalise) the change into the way of working. During this phase further improvements will usually be identified that must then be fed back into the cycle to achieve continuous improvement.

## Reinforce

An alliance of the trainer, the learner, and the learner's line or team manager must work together to find opportunities and encourage the learner to use the knowledge. At first, the learner may struggle and will need sympathetic coaching to learn from mistakes or misunderstandings. It may be that the training needs review and tuning based on post-delivery experience.

The learner will also need support and this should be provided through appropriate follow-on training or aids. A typical "reinforcement package" might include a resource library, e-learning seminars, and coaching.

## Inspect

Management needs to be alert to any reversion to the old way through review and inspection, publicly recognising those that adopt and exploit the new skills or systems. The educator needs follow-up with additional materials and support, perhaps a help desk.

## Review

Immediately following the training and other change activities we should expect to see benefits and need to check that this is so and that over time these lead to an improved business scorecard. This will also identify issues that need to be addressed through coaching, reinforcement and revision of training and other materials.





At this point we need to revisit the Kirkpatrick based goals we set in the **Formulate** phase, to assess our progress.

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We need to evaluate our training efforts at these four levels, ultimately linking our change efforts to our business scorecard and financial results.

It is important to recognise that these change evaluations need to be made over ever-increasing cycle times from immediate for Response (level 1) to months or even years for Results (level 4).

## Summary

Treating Training Development as a change programme has a number of benefits.

Firstly, all the things needed to achieve the business goals are included within the programme goals, measures and plan, greatly increasing the likelihood of a successful outcome.

Secondly, the training is designed around the learner's personal goal and the organisation's business goal.

Thirdly, the training programme is well supported with improved tools and processes, complementary to the training, giving the learner all he or she needs to use their new skills.



Finally, a systematic inspection and improvement programme helps identify follow-on change and training needs, leading to continuous improvement.



*ChangeBEAT defines, develops and executes change programmes that help achieve enduring business benefit rapidly and reliably. Our people have practical field experience, and are equipped with WingBEAT, our proven change methodology, and our extensive tools. We are professional, pragmatic and action oriented.*

*ChangeBEAT is a trading name and a trademark of Contact to ContRact Ltd.*

For further information call **+44 (0) 208 446 6946** or visit **[www.ChangeBEAT.com](http://www.ChangeBEAT.com)**