

## Professional Development Success: Improving ROI

# Manager/Employee Discussion Planner

Organizational leaders play a major role in reinforcing the skills, knowledge, and abilities employees learn by attending professional development programs. Research shows that if leaders demonstrate *active* support (see below), training will improve performance 90 percent of the time. Passive support will result in about a 50 percent transfer rate. No support or negative support adds obstacles to employees' efforts to apply what they learned.

Increasing your return on the investment in employee development doesn't need to take a lot of time or effort. A brief meeting before and after the training can increase employee focus, learning, and results. We've provided some sample conversation starters and strategies to get you started. The benefits to you: improved efficiencies, performance, employee engagement, and ultimately more time to devote to your own priorities.

*Below are some of the ways that you can help learning take hold on the job.*

### Schedule Discussions Before and After the Training

Have discussions with employees both before and after the training to discuss what's being covered in the training and how it relates to your employees' performance goals. For more information on setting SMART goals, see support materials in the Performance Management Tool Kit.

### Follow-Up on Any Action Plan

Ask to see the action plan created in the training or have employees create one if needed. Check in regularly to monitor progress and help the employees through any barriers to applying the knowledge/skills gained in training.

### Show the Connection Between Learning and Performance Metrics

Whenever possible, show the employees how what they learned will help them be more successful in achieving their goals or meeting individual and team success standards.

### Link Business Goals/Initiatives & Learning Goals

Help employees see how what they learned can be applied more broadly in their jobs. Where else could they use what they learned? How do the concepts or skills support upcoming initiatives? The more dots they connect, the more valuable their new knowledge becomes.

### Create Opportunities for Group Coaching

If you have several employees who have taken the course, encourage them to meet and learn from their successes and mistakes. Suggest an employee share key concepts learned during the next staff meeting.

### Be a Model

If you are attending the training, be aware that people will follow your example. If they see you applying the concepts or skills you learned, they're more likely to do so. If you don't, they won't.

### Be a Coach Yourself

If you know the skills or concepts that were taught, look for ways to reinforce them on the job.

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The following sample agenda can help leaders discuss the training their direct reports will be attending and help connect the training to performance goals. This is also a great time to share your expectations on what you hope the employee will learn. While you do not want to speak for your employee, you want to ask leading, open ended questions to discover their thoughts on how they believe this training will empower them.

### Opening

- *“Let’s talk about how to get the best return on investment of your time attending this training.”*
- *“I’d like to discuss:*
  - *the content of the program,*
  - *how it relates to your performance goals and why it’s important, and*
  - *how we can cover your work load while you’re attending the training.”*

### Content, Goals, and Coverage

#### Program Content:

- *“What is your understanding of what this training provides?”*
- *“Let’s talk about how to get the best return on investment by allowing you to attend this training.”*

#### Performance Goals:

- Be clear about the reason behind the training. *“I’m asking all my reports to attend this program”* or *“This is a development area we have discussed.”*
- *“What do you hope to do more effectively as a result of attending this program?”*
- *“How can we measure the expectations you have for yourself after the program is complete?”*
- *“Here’s why the skills discussed in this program are important...and here’s how they relate to your performance expectations...”*

#### Logistics:

- *“I’d like to discuss the program contents, how it relates to your performance goals, and how we can cover your work load while you are attending the program.”*
- *“It’s important that you are fully committed to the program and not distracted by your workload. Tell me what needs to happen so you can give the program your full attention.”*
- Use this opportunity to problem solve with your employee.

### Close and Follow-Up

- Summarize next actions
- *“Thank you for your interest in professional development. I look forward to talking to you after the session to discuss your action plan.”*
- Schedule a meeting for checking in after the training program.

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Following up with your employee after training is complete not only communicates to them that expectations must be met, but, more importantly, that you are engaging in their commitment to better themselves and their performance on the job. Here are some examples to get this conversation started:

### Open

- *“I’m really interested to hear what you thought about the training and how you can use it.”*
- *“I’d like to talk about how we can follow-up this training and make an action plan to integrate what you found most useful.”*

### Debriefing, Action Plan, Next Steps

#### Debriefing:

- *“What was the most useful thing you learned from the program?”*
- *“Was there anything you did not find useful?”*
  - This question is important as the employee may feel stuck if they cannot talk through these points.
- *“How can you see yourself applying your new skills?”*
- *“Who else can benefit from what you’ve learned?”*
  - This can help to involve others in your team and pass on the excitement to other team members.

#### Review or Create an Action Plan:

- Invite the employee to share the action plan created in training, or to partner with you to plan out how and when he/she can apply the skills they have learned.

#### Next Steps:

- Plan a time to check in with the employee after the debrief discussion has taken place and hold them accountable to the action plan they set in motion.
- Thank them for the time and energy they are devoting to their skills, let them know you look forward to seeing how things go, and remind them that you are there to support them.

### Close and Follow-Up

- Summarize next actions
  - *“Thanks again for the time and dedication you’re giving to learning and applying new skills I look forward seeing how things go.”*

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## Consider the WIIFM Behind Employees Attending Training

It is important to ensure that your employees are receiving the training that speaks to your department's goals. Think about the "What's in it for me" (WIIFM), and the benefit to the team and organization prior to approving employee's attending a session.

## Team Development

It is sometimes best to send an entire unit to a training program if there is a shared skill that all employees, or a core group, in your unit need to learn. For these situations please reach out to [HRLearning@uc.edu](mailto:HRLearning@uc.edu) to set up a consultation with our experienced training team.

## Logistics

- All classes require manager approval (*see next page for details on how to approve through the registration system*).
- Some classes have a fee to cover participant materials. These will be noted in the class description and manager email for participant approval. Managers will need to provide budget information on the approval form.
- Some courses require a pre-requisite as noted in the course description.
- Attendees are responsible for placing a reminder on their Outlook calendars.
- Training courses are restricted to the University's operating calendar and inclement weather policies. If a class is moved or rescheduled participants will be notified.
- Reach out to [HRLearning@uc.edu](mailto:HRLearning@uc.edu) for more information or questions on course offerings.

The **Staff Success Center** provides leadership training for UC employees through instructor lead workshops, e-learning modules, team building exercises, team retreats, consultation, and much more.

### Staff Success Center Directory:

- **Email:** [hrlearning@uc.edu](mailto:hrlearning@uc.edu)
- **Phone:** 513-556-4772
- **Web:** [www.uc.edu/hr/ssc](http://www.uc.edu/hr/ssc)