
Bridges Across the Transfer Gap

As a paradox, all training and coaching open a gap between individually acquired capacities and skills on one side and its practice in the real work environment embedded in the organisations where the individual is thought to apply the new skills.

The effectiveness of **rapid learning and change** through out-of-the job training and coaching is determined to a large extent by the **transfer into practice**, in other words: The extent to which the former participants of a learning event are capable to apply acquired skills in their job without getting further support. Therefore, a core task of any training and coaching should incorporate the **preparation of the transfer** to bridge the gap between the learning process and the self-reliant practical application of what has been learned.

The following **seven suggestions** to bridge the transfer gap make no claim to completeness:

- Work on **real, genuine issues and problems**: Combine different methods of case work and visualization to get to the real, authentic problems and situations. If possible, work on real cases of the participants and compare them with theories and concepts. Respect reserve and caution of participants when they are invited to expose their problems.
- Promote all forms of **practice-oriented** learning: Joint assessment of work experience, horizontal exchange of experience with practical exercises. Develop learning activities to match the given situation, in response to the problems experienced by the target group: training and coaching involves a high proportion of practical skills development through exercises, problem-solving activities and case studies.
- Focus on **critical events** and circumstances, thus avoiding attribution of mistakes to individual persons. Identify potentials for learning in daily work. Case work and role plays take into account the given organisational environment that enables or blocks learning and innovation in the organization. Anticipating possible pitfalls, resistances, potentials and difficulties that may emerge when the participants apply the acquired capacities and skills at their workplace.
- Prefer to provide training and coaching to **operational teams** working together in real life. Function-based groups offer the opportunity to define coordination tasks, clarify roles and manage interfaces.
- Keep training **short**, shaped in **intensive blocks**, and ensure that it includes the development of social and communication skills and reflection on transfer into the organisation. Consolidate individual learning through regular group work and stimulate the sense for progress by joint evaluations.
- If possible, after a month or two we address the transfer gap by calling the target group again to a short **transfer workshop** to share and reflect on the potential and limits of application in their organisation.