

RESEARCH REPORT: TIME PERIODS AND ROLES THAT MAKE TRAINING STICK

by Barbara Carnes, Ph.D.

Until recently it was commonly believed that trainers conducted training, trainees participated in training, and the result was that the trainees changed their on-the-job practices to use what they had learned. However, researchers Mary Broad and John Newstrom were among the first to report that transferring learning to the job is much more complex than this. They identified three time periods relative to any training: before the training, during the training, and after the training. They also identified three roles that impact training transfer: the trainer, the trainee, and the manager (boss) of the trainee.

Then they surveyed a large cross-section of individuals in organizations: trainers, managers, line workers. They asked the question, "Which combinations of time and role are most powerful for training transfer? Respondents ranked their responses with 1 being the most powerful combination of time period and role and 9 being the least powerful. The results were:

Most powerful combination of time periods and roles

Role	Before	During	After
Boss (Manager)	1	8	3
Trainer	2	4	9
Trainee	7	5	6

The number in each box indicates the relative importance of each combination of time period and role.

The researchers then asked the same group, "What are the most frequently used time period and role combinations?" The results were:

Most frequently focused on time periods and roles

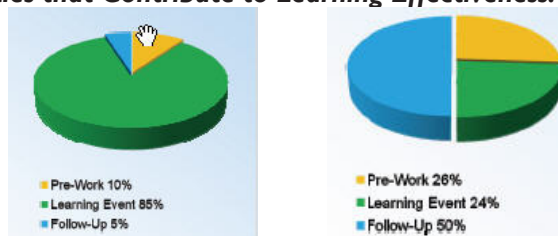
Role	Before	During	After
Boss (Manager)	5	6	9
Trainer	2	1	7
Trainee	8	3	4

There was a clear difference between the most powerful time/role combinations and the most frequently used, especially for the role of the trainee's manager!

It is important to note, however, that while this research was based on survey data from "a group of organizationally-mixed trainers", the exact number of respondents in this and their other surveys was not disclosed. It is also important to note that the research was conducted prior to 1992. Given the number and types of changes in organizations from then until the present time, it is reasonable to believe that if the survey were conducted today, some of the responses might be different.

Dr. Brent Peterson in his 2004 research provided another interesting comparison that somewhat contradicts Broad and Newstrom's research. He found that the activities that contribute to learning effectiveness were: pre-work – 26%, the learning event – 24%, and follow up – 50%, while the typical learning investment (that is, money spent) was: pre-work – 10%, the learning event – 85%, and follow-up 5% (see charts).

Activities that Contribute to Learning Effectiveness:



Many participants in my Making Training Stick workshops have consistently commented that while they believe that most of the powerful time/role combinations still hold true today, they believe that strategies and practices to get pre-training buy-in from the manager (boss) of the trainee are used more frequently today than they were 1992, as are strategies and practices to involve the manager in after-training reinforcement. Other participants report that these matrices are just as relevant today as they were in 1992 – and that managers are just as uninvolved now as they were then.

Mary Broad in a later work points out that there is a difference in the post-training behavior of "autonomous performers" compared with "supervised performers." She points out that these two groups of trainees need different kinds of support for their training transfer – from their managers and from their trainer. For example:

Autonomous Performers Need:	Supervised Performers Need:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize/reinforce the need to improve their own performance, and the value/rewards for doing so Validation that the new knowledge/skills are important and credible Information about the practicality of the knowledge/skills (how they can be used on the job) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear expectations for after-training behavior and use of skills Necessary resources to support after-training behavior and use of skills Timely and relevant feedback, especially from their manager Time in their work day to try out the new skills.

More workplace learning professionals and others in their organizations are beginning to recognize that what happens before and after a learning event is just as important as what takes place during the event itself. They are also beginning, slowly, to recognize that in addition to the trainer and the trainee, the manager of the trainee is an important player in helping to make the training stick. Specific techniques for involving the manager in before- and after-training can be found in [Making Training Stick: A Training Transfer Field Guide](#).



Barbara Carnes, Ph.D. is an international consultant and author with a passion for training transfer (making it stick). Check out the books she has co-authored: [Making Training Stick and The Making Training Stick Field Guide](#) for step-by-step tips. Contact Barbara at:

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