

# The Science of Training and Development in Organizations: What Matters in Practice

June 11, 2012

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Each year, organizations in the United States spend roughly \$135 billion on employee training. Companies know that they need to encourage the continued learning and development of their workforce in order to stay on top in their field. Because a trained workforce can provide a competitive advantage to companies, it makes sense to implement the best training program possible — especially one guided by sound science. In this article, Salas (University of Central Florida), Tannenbaum (The Group for Organizational Effectiveness), Kraiger (Colorado State University), and Smith-Jentsch (University of Central Florida) describe the current state of the science and practice of training, discuss why organizations should care about employee training, and outline processes for creating the most effective training program possible.

Training research and practice have greatly advanced within the last 30 years, moving from what was once described as a “nonempirical” field to one based on science. Research not only has shown that well-designed training programs work, but also has provided insights into what makes a program effective. According to the authors, what occurs during training is not the only thing that matters; what occurs before and after training is just as important for program success.

Based on past research, the authors suggest several steps that should be taken before, during, and after training to maximize a program’s impact. Research indicates that organizations should take steps before training to create an appropriate learning climate and conduct a Training Needs Analysis — a diagnosis of what needs to be trained, to whom, and in what organizational system. During training, organizations

should take steps to create the right trainee mindset and should use training strategies that utilize appropriate instructional principles. After training, employers should ensure that transfer of the training has occurred and should evaluate the training methods to see if any improvements could be made.

By becoming informed about and active in the training process, business leaders and policy makers can positively influence the scientific rigor — and therefore effectiveness — of training at their organizations, thus maximizing the potential of their workforce and of their organization as a whole.

About the Authors ([PDF](#), [HTML](#))

## **Editorial: Commentary on the Science of Training and Development in Organizations: What Matters in Practice**

By **Paul W. Thayer**

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