



## Transfer of learning weak in workplace

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Contradictions seen on how much learning is really applied in the workplace: global study

A recent global survey of how learning is transferred in the workplace revealed that a system to transfer learning is practically non-existent.

Sixty percent of respondents in a global survey said they do not have a systematic approach to preparing their trainees to transfer, or apply, what they learnt in the trainings to the workplace setting.

The results were from a recently released study conducted by ESI International, which offers certification courses for the workforce. In March 2011, ESI International sent out by e-mail their Transfer of Learning Survey and more than 3,000 respondents from the government and private sector replied. The study tried "to assess an organisation's success or difficulty in fostering a learning transfer climate in the workplace. "

Unfortunately, the results of the study were disappointing with researchers noting even contradictions in some responses.

### Missing steps

"It's clear that organisations are still missing some fundamental steps to ensure the transfer of training; these steps include the development of an overall learning transfer plan, a strategy for reinforcing the application of learning post-training, a clear way to measure if and to what extent learning is applied on the job, and manager involvement during the pre- and post-learning phase," stated the report titled "Applying Training and Transferring Learning in the Workplace: How to Turn Hope into Reality" which was released last month.

The lack of a system to measure the transfer of learning means organisations do not have proof to validate what two-thirds of respondents say that they apply more than 25 percent of knowledge they gained from training to their actual jobs.

Almost 60 percent of respondents say their primary means of measuring how they estimate the transfer of knowledge is either through informal or anecdotal feedback or by a "guess".

When respondents were asked if they have a formal process or system to ensure that training is applied successfully within their organisation, only 32.8 percent of respondents said they do not have a formal process or system. ESI International takes this to mean that 67.2 percent believe they do have a formal process.

Two-thirds, or 67.6 percent, of respondents estimate that they apply more than 25 per cent of training knowledge back on the job. However, again, the respondents can offer no proof to validate this claim.

### Conflicting responses

ESI International said conflicting responses raise doubts on whether these organisations indeed have a formal learning system or their success rate in the learning transfer.

"The study points out some striking contradictions in how well organisations think they transfer learning and the lack of proof to back up their estimate of learning transfer or on-the-job application," said Raed S. Haddad, senior vice president, global delivery services, ESI International. "Client experience shows us that organisations often fail to establish success criteria or identify expectations for learning engagements. This is a key pre-training strategy in order to measure trainee performance against agreed upon standards."

The study points to the managers as the key to guarantee that learning is transferred in the workplace.

Managers are expected to support the learning process, as indicated by 71 percent of respondents. On what kind of support, 63.3 percent said managers must endorse the programme of transfer of learning while comments solicited from the survey indicate that managers are expected to identify the training needs, and formalise the learning transfer process.