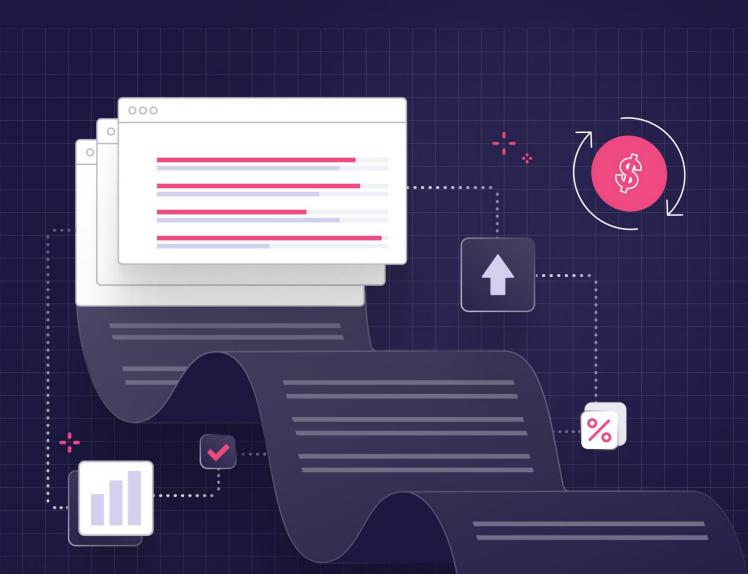
Hone

Investing in Your Future: How to Measure the ROI of Manager Training Programs



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No one will ever know, appreciate, or believe the true value training brings to the business bottom line until you show them.

Paul Leone, PhD L&D Measurement Expert

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INTRODUCTION

The Challenge of Measuring ROI

Time and time again, the question we hear the most from learning professionals is: how do I measure the impact of training?

It's up to you to lead business leaders toward truly understanding the value and impact training has on your company's bottom line. Aggregating this information is rigorous and time-consuming. Procuring the budget and proving positive ROI requires research, team data, and a compelling story to share with your stakeholders.

As the enterprise platform for live online learning, Hone partners with enterprise organizations to build powerful learning and development (L&D) programs, which is why our team of Learning Strategists created this ebook. *Investing in Your Future: How to Measure the ROI of Manager Training Programs* is a comprehensive research-based playbook to empower you with the tools you need to tell your ROI impact story.

In this ebook, you will learn how to:

- Present the ROI story to stakeholders
- Use a model that breaks down the different ways to measure L&D effectiveness
- Use an ROI formula for your training impact calculations
- Present a Case Study that you can model your ROI story
- Produce an evaluation strategy that will advocate for long-term growth.

Hone Inc, and Paul Leone, Ph.D. L&D Measurement Expert www.honehq.com

When training is done well, companies see real business impact.



^{*}Calculated using an average annual salary of \$100,000 and these 2022 statistics: 25% of employees at privately-owned companies will leave their jobs this year (CNBC), strong L&D yields a 43% reduction in employee turnover (Gallup); it costs 55% of a person's annual salary just to replace them (SHRM).

Presenting ROI to Stakeholders

There are hundreds of reasons why you should invest in scalable training for your team, from the positive impact of building better leaders to building high-trust relationships to creating a more inclusive organization. However, communicating the ROI impact back to your executives is a separate and distinct story you need to tell your executives and stakeholders for them to recognize and appreciate the contribution training makes to the business. The responsibility of telling this story and getting buy-in on training's effectiveness falls on the training professional, typically an HR, L&D, or DEI leader within the company. The key to telling this story is aggregating the research, the data, and comprehensive case studies that show you achieved a positive ROI on a significant investment.



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Show the Value of Your Programs

Bear in mind many teams within your organization are competing for the same resources and budget and come to the table with evidence that their initiatives are worth the business investment. For example, if you worked in technology and just developed and implemented new software, and you wanted to show your CEO the value it adds to the business, you would clearly explain in detail the benefits—revenue generation, the cost savings, and customer experience enhancements. Likewise, if you work in marketing and have just launched a new social media campaign, you would want to show your CEO all the great benefits your initiative achieved via more sales, more customers, and more revenue from before to after the campaign.

It is critical for L&D to show business value. No matter where you work within the organization, your most significant priority should be to deliver the results that boost the business's health. Then, the leaders within your organization see the value of your programs and invest more money in your group.

Learning and development leaders must construct impact training studies.

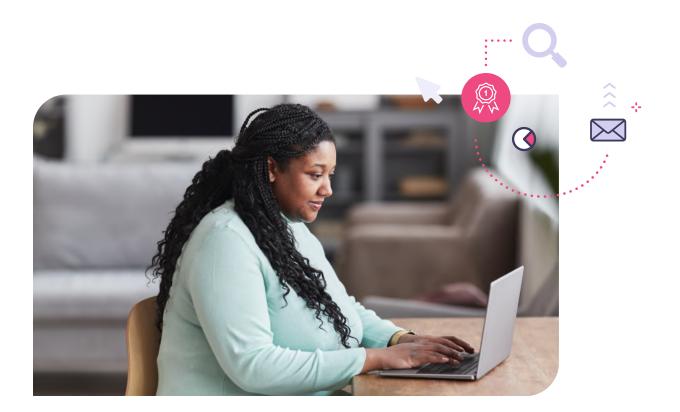
Training professionals have to construct impact studies that look before and after training, prove the value story, and explain the tremendous benefits clearly and in great detail. For example, revenue generation, cost savings, and customer experience enhancements created directly by the training experience should be spotlighted and spelled out in a straightforward "story of impact."

If you want to sit at the C-suite and hold your head high, you've got to prove you're a money-maker instead of a money-taker. Unfortunately, because learning and development initiatives can be challenging to measure, the results of these programs are often unseen. Without demonstrable proof that these initiatives drive businesses forward, we may unintentionally fuel the notion that training is a function that doesn't provide a high return on investment (ROI). It's up to us as training professionals to start advocating that training grows people and profit and therefore grows everybody's budget.

In this ebook, we'll discuss impact case studies based on research conducted by Hone's Learning Strategist industry experts from over the past two decades. They've created impact studies that anticipate how stakeholders will respond to the data and their questions about validity and reliability.

How to Start Telling Your ROI Story

The good news is that telling this value story and changing the minds of skeptical business leaders doesn't mean you have to immediately implement an enterprise-wide evaluation strategy and measure every piece of training that's bought or built. Instead, it only takes a few good case studies with targeted training programs before your stakeholders will start seeing the light. In fact, within just a few months, a group of otherwise doubtful business leaders can become believers with just one or two visible case studies. Moreover, once you start telling them the story of impact, it gets easier and easier with each program.



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Why do an Impact/ROI Case Study?



SATISFIED STAKEHOLDERS

92% of senior business leaders and stakeholders want to see quantifiable results from their training functions, yet only 9% of internal L&D organizations show them anything. Based on 2015 ATD study of 110 top companies and their executives



BIGGER BUDGET

L&D organizations that attempted to measure their training initiatives up to Level 3 and 4 had almost double the training budget of companies who measured only to Level 1. Based on data from 216 entry nominations for ATD Best and Training Magazine Top 125



GREATER IMPACT

Measuring the impact of training and using that data to adapt and inform future roll-outs can improve the business impact and ROI by 75%. Based on data from 57 case studies conducted in 4 different organizations

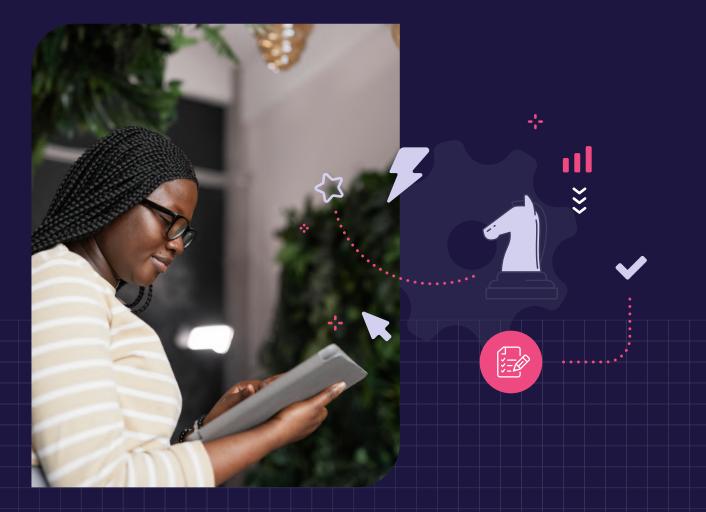
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The point is this:

CEOs and stakeholders don't want to be skeptical about training impact. But, without any evidence or data, training professionals have left themselves vulnerable to the skeptics who think training is a "nice to have" but not an imperative, and certainly not as critical as the other business functions that more directly generate revenue or cost savings.

Without reporting your training's contributions to the bottom line, your training function won't enjoy the security and respect it deserves. With that said, it's time to start measuring! Invest in resources that gather your data and present your findings. It may be the best ROI you ever achieve.

How to Measure ROI: Approach and Metrics



The Levels of Evaluation – A New Look

The most well-known and comprehensively used measures of training impact are those set forth by Kirkpatrick (Levels 1 – 4: Reaction, Learning, Behaviour Change, Business Impact) and Phillips (adding Level 5: ROI). These Levels define the effects of training from a participant's initial reaction to the course (typically measured immediately after the event) to its impact on the bottom line (measured months after completion to allow a participant to apply their learning and experience on the job).

The "new look" version of the evaluation levels is based on two substantial upgrades:

- 01 The traditional 5 Levels are now streamlined via honing best practices over the years and only reporting on what's most interesting and actionable for stakeholders.
- 02 The inclusion of the newest level of evaluation Level 6 (Factors that Maximize ROI). This critical Level 6 is based on over a decade of research by Dr. Paul Leone, and it tells us about the post-training factors back on the job that can maximize your Level 5 ROI results and take your measurement strategy to the "next level."

The 6 Levels Explained

Here is a summary of the entire 6 Levels and what they evaluate:

	LEVEL	MEASURES	
	6	Factors that Maximize ROI	Level 6 is an evaluation that simply measures your learning climate and tells you which environmental factors are most affecting the impact of your training back on the job.
	5	ROI	Level 5 measures the extent to which the benefits of a particular training experience outweigh the costs of that training experience.
	4	Business Impact	Level 4 measures the extent to which training improves critical business metrics and other indicators of business health.
	3	Behavior Change	Level 3 measures the extent to which participants return to their everyday jobs and apply what they learned in training.
	2	Learning	Level 2 measures the extent to which new knowledge and skills were acquired during the training.
	1	Reaction	Level 1 Measures the extent to which training participants react positively to the training.
	0	Attendance	Level 0 is the most basic unit of logistics measurement but fails to speak to the positive impact of training.

LEVEL O

Did they show up?

Level 0 measures the simple logistics of the training.

- How many participants showed up?
- How many hours/days were they trained?
- How many of the registered participants completed the entire training program?

Level 0 is labeled as such because it doesn't speak to the quality, effectiveness, and impact of training but rather just tracks the logistics of the training experience for the organization.

LEVEL 1

Reaction – Did they like it?

Level 1 measures the extent to which training participants react positively to the training.

- How did they rate the training?
- Would they recommend Hone training?

Level 1's surveys should be two minutes at maximum and are typically administered immediately after the program to capture impressions while they are still fresh. It should also ask participants for open-ended or qualitative feedback. (e.g., "What was the best / worst part of this training experience?")

METRICS WE USE AT HONE

Hone

At Hone, we measure Level 1 impact through the content, the facilitators, satisfaction with the program, and whether participants would recommend it.

Learning – Did they learn anything?

Level 2 measures the extent to which new knowledge and skills were acquired during the training.

- Are they gaining new and valuable knowledge that they can apply to their role?
- Are they leaving with critical knowledge and capabilities that will help them do their jobs better?

The data here tells us whether they have acquired valuable learning that gives them the potential to perform better. Level 2 is a knowledge check at the end of the program, a difference score between a pre and a post-test, or it can be a few targeted questions asking participants about their new learning.

METRICS WE USE AT HONE

Level 2 at Hone is measured by capturing the extent to which learners gained new and valuable knowledge directly relevant to their role.

LEVEL 3

Behaviour Change – Are they doing anything differently or better on the job?

Level 3 measures the extent to which participants return to their everyday jobs and apply what they learned in training.

- Do they do something better?
- Do they do something more efficient?
- Did they improve the critical skills that were taught in training?

Level 3 is probably the most critical measure because if behavior change doesn't happen and nothing gets applied, then all the training impact stops there. No business metric improvement could ever be attributed to the training; indeed, no ROI could ever be calculated if participants don't do anything differently. Conversely, if you demonstrate that your training improved how employees do something, you're literally "halfway there" to ROI.

Level 3 typically comes from a multi-rater survey administered 2-3 months after the training concludes. For instance, a 180 assessment that asks direct reports for their observations is perfect for measuring behavior change in leaders and managers. Here, participants (the managers) and their direct reports are asked about improvements they've observed in the essential skills and behaviors taught in training. Participants self-report, but the direct reports corroborate that those on-the-job improvements happened. The direct reports make the most sense to include in this multi-rater feedback because they would be the first to notice any changes and modifications in their leader's behaviors.

METRICS WE USE AT HONE

The metrics Hone measures at this level are improvements in the key behaviors and skills taught in training. Each class is closely aligned to critical skills and behaviors. The on-the-job improvements around manager effectiveness are captured 60 days post-training.





Business Impact – Did it impact business?

Level 4 measures the extent to which training improves critical business metrics and other indicators of business health.

- Did it improve the performance metrics and indicators that matter to the business?
- Does making behavioral improvements and applying the new knowledge and skills actually lead to better business metrics and higher performance?
- S What was the increase in productivity?
- What was the increase in sales revenue, customer satisfaction, or amounts of widgets produced?
- What were the real benefits to the business?

Level 4 is where you need to identify the most critical metrics to the business, define how much they improved, and then isolate how much of that improvement was directly attributable to your specific training program.

Level 4 data is typically collected by partnering closely with the business and honing in on only those metrics that truly drive the company's success. Like Level 3, this data must be collected several months after the program to allow time for transfer and effect. For example, for manager and leader training, you collect these critical metrics for their team and direct reports. If managers improve their leadership skills, their direct reports should become more engaged and productive which directly impacts business metrics for the better.

METRICS WE USE AT HONE

For Level 4, Hone measures increases in employee performance, increases in hard revenue-generating or cost-saving business metrics, and any movement in the HR metrics that indicate positive employee environments (e.g., retention, engagement, appraisals, etc.). For each of these, Hone takes the extra step of isolating the impact of training via control groups, attribution analysis, and employee estimates.

ROI – Was it worth the investment?

Level 5 measures the extent to which the benefits of a particular training experience outweigh the costs of that training experience.

- Do all the positive benefits of training outweigh the cost of the training?
- For example, if we monetize the benefits and realize there is an increase in revenue generation or cost savings based on the training, is it enough to offset the training costs and give us a positive ROI?

The final ROI data point is expressed as a percentage of the original investment. The ROI calculation can only be done when the benefits identified in Level 4 have been turned into \$ values for the business or monetized. Once monetized, they can be compared to the total costs. Here is the ROI formula that shows how we calculate the overall ROI:

ROI =	BENEFIT - COST	X 100
KOT -	соѕт	× 100

Note: Anything above 0% ROI means that the training already paid back the original investment and is now a "profit" number for the business. We inflate the costs and understate the benefits to give stakeholders the most conservative estimate of ROI.

METRICS WE USE AT HONE

Metrics Hone measures at Level 5 are all the quantifiable monetary values of the benefits found at Level 4. Some benefits are harder to turn into monetary values (e.g., customer satisfaction) and some are easier (e.g., sales, customer call-backs, etc.). However, any company's internal Finance department can typically translate the % increases in specific metrics into direct bottom-line money values. Once these benefits are tallied for the post-training months, they are then compared to fully loaded costs of the training (e.g., vendor costs, time away from job, travel, etc). 18

Factors that Maximize ROI – What maximizes ROI?

Level 6 is an evaluation that simply measures your learning climate and tells you which environmental factors are most affecting the impact of your training back on the job.

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What are environmental factors (things happening in the employee's immediate work environment) either supporting or sabotaging the impact of training?

This Level 6 takes Level 5 ROI to the next level by telling you how to maximize that ROI in the future. In short, if you can identify and understand the factors that are making your training more impactful for some trainees over others, you've found a way of making all training more impactful. After over a decade of research on these post-training climates, Dr. Leone's results consistently show that these climate elements are so powerful at predicting the overall impact of your training that they can literally "make or break" your entire initiative.

The good news is that shorter, less expensive training solutions can be just as, or even more powerful than, high-cost solutions if you can successfully identify and leverage these post-training factors to maximize impact.

For instance, some case studies have shown that strong immediate manager support (the manager of the trainee) can triple the business impact and ROI of your training. Therefore, it's okay to spend less money on the training experience and put more effort into driving great manager support back on the job, concluding that driving great manager support is perhaps the most critical finding. This additional analysis can ultimately tell you how to improve the impact and ROI of any training program within your organization.

METRICS WE USE AT HONE

Level 6 metrics are measured by looking at all the Level 3, 4, and 5 results across your entire set of learners and then dissecting them based on certain factors (e.g., whether learners had manager support, whether they attended any refreshers or practice labs, etc). The level 6 analysis looks for significant differences in the impact results. For instance, do participants who attend post-training practice labs have significantly more behavior change, business impact, or ROI than participants who did not attend practice labs? This information is critical to L&D organizations because the data can tell them which post-training climates can maximize their investments.



A Learning and Development Training ROI Case Study

To bring this Level model and approach to life, here is an actual case study with Zola in which the effectiveness and ROI of manager training were measured and reported to key stakeholders.



The Manager Training ROI Case Study

who

64 Zola employees enrolled in Hone's Manager Core Program

WHY

The idea is to inspire and create small behavior changes in managers that will affect their front-line, customer-facing direct reports.

Measurements in the Manager Training Case Study

Through a sample of participants and their immediate direct reports, we wanted to understand how applying better manager practices (e.g., having more productive one on ones, coaching toward clearer goals, removing organizational barriers, etc.) could drive higher performance for their customer-facing teams.

6-Level Measurement Strategy

Our 6-level measurement strategy was designed to answer six simple questions:

- 1 Were managers engaged with the training experience?
- 2 Did managers gain new and valuable insights into how they can be better, more influential leaders?
- 3 Did managers apply those insights and improve critical leader behaviors on the job 2-3 months after the training?
- 4 Did managers positively affect their teams' business performance – what was the increase in performance for the direct reports of these managers?

- 5 Did the overall benefits outweigh the costs of training ROI?
- 6 How did the manager's manager affect the overall impact and ROI of the training?

See the table below for a summary of the 6-Level approach and methodology:

	LEVEL	MEASURES		
Î	6	Factors that Maximize ROI	Via ongoing measurement of other factors (i.e. manager support)	
	5	ROI	398%	ROI benefits vs costs of training after just 3 months
LEARNING EFFECTIVENESS	4	Business Impact	24%	increase in performance directly attributable to training
	3	Behavior Change	82%	improved key behaviors back on the job post-training
	2	Learning	97%	said they gained new and valuable information for their role
	1	Reaction	4.6/5	average class rating
	0	Attendance	74%	completed the program

The results were as follows:

LEVEL 1

Learners were engaged and satisfied with their class experience. The average class rating was 4.6/5.

LEVEL 2

97% of learners said what they learned from their training aligned with the Zola culture.

LEVEL 3

81% of learners improved critical manager skills due to the training.

LEVEL 4

87% of learners reported that their leadership improvements increased their teams' performance. The key performance increases directly attributable to training were estimated (on average) to be 24%. There was a 42% increase in engagement from the direct reports of learners. There was a 49% deeper connection between the learner and direct reports. 43% found an improvement in the quality of work from their direct reports. 49% reported a deeper relationship between learners and direct reports. 81% of learners said this development opportunity increased their commitment to the success of Zola.

LEVEL 5

398% ROI benefit to cost of training after three months. For every \$1 Zola spent on training, they made back \$4.98 in return.

LEVEL 6

Managers with direct reports who were more open to feedback had more substantial results.

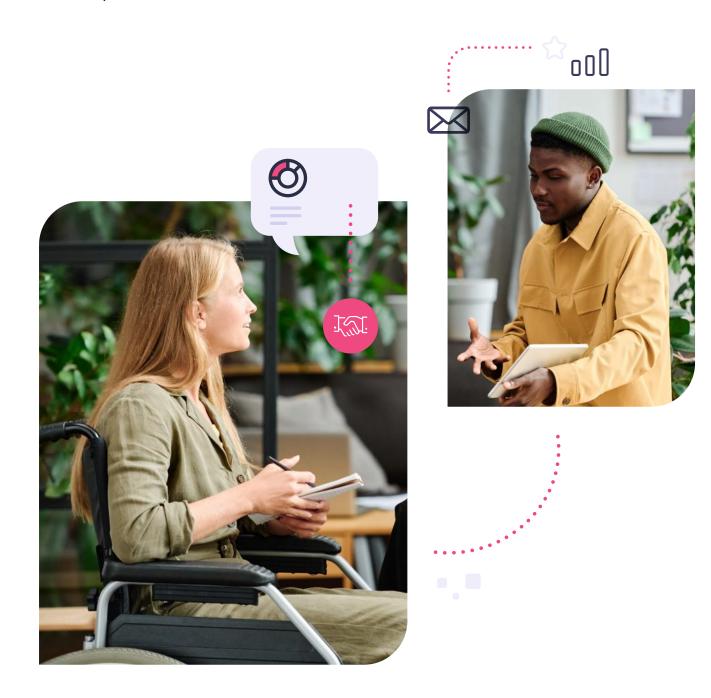
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The hidden worth of training

The impact and results of this manager training align with a positive ROI. Still, the most significant benefits are not even included in our ROI calculations and extend far beyond this one program and the two to three months we measured. In this study, the actual monetized benefits we measured are just a quick snapshot in time (60 days post-training) and do not represent the full impact and long-term effects of leadership improvements (60 days and beyond). With these studies and results, the implication is that most L&D professionals and stakeholders need to pay more attention to the actual value of training. In addition, stakeholders should be constantly reminded that the benefits captured in such a short study are measured in terms of short-term financial returns. But in fact, the returns can continue to pay off for years after the training. Simply put, investing in your people can be your best and longest-term investment.

For managers who took the training, it sends a clear signal to them that their organization is committed to their career development. When you send this clear message of commitment to their development, employees will return that commitment many times over. These types of increases in commitment are hard to track from a financial perspective, so we call them the "intangible benefits." However, these intangible benefits can often be more significant long-term benefits than the tangibles. Therefore, every study needs to present and remind stakeholders of both. Moreover, for the managers' direct reports, having an even slightly better leader who connects with them more often and provides marginally better direction and support can significantly improve morale, motivation, and productivity. 25

If that manager can inspire and influence five to ten direct reports with these honed leader behaviors, the impact can ripple out and continue well after the measurement window. Another reason why investing in things like leadership training for your managers can be the best decision you ever make.



An ROI Evaluation Helps Provide the Highest-Impact Training in the Future

An ROI impact study can tell you whether your current training had an impact and how to improve training impact in the future.



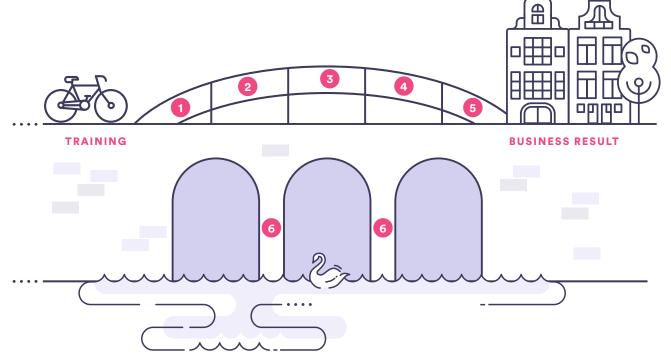
Connect your training to the bottom line with an ROI impact study.

Suppose you are going to make a successful multi-month journey that takes you from a training event to a substantial business impact. In that case, you should construct and map out some major milestones along the way in an evaluation strategy. Whether you call it a bridge, a roadmap, a blueprint, or a measurement map, the path you build must connect your training (point of origin) to your bottom-line business performance (your destination).





What might this bridge look like?



- **LEVEL 1** The roadmap begins with an engaging training experience.
- **LEVEL** 2 Then, that training leads to new learning.
- **LEVEL 3** Those learnings lead to behavior change.
- **LEVEL** 4 That behavior change leads to business impact (Level 4)
- **LEVEL 5** And the business impact should be significant enough to justify and exceed all training costs.
- **LEVEL 6** These are the stepping stones and critical linkages of your bridge. All around this bridge is your climate that can either make your journey smooth and successful or veer you off your path, straight to a failed training investment.

The Importance of an Evaluation Strategy

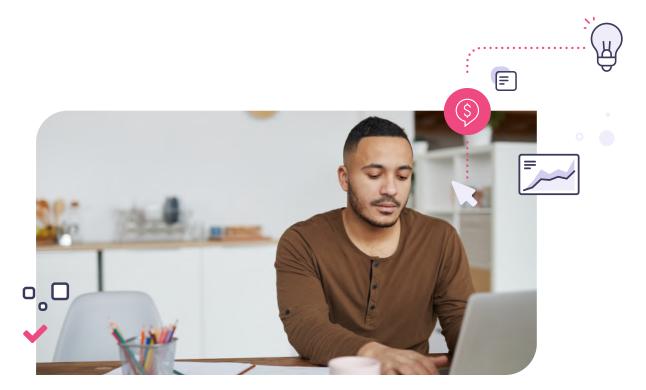
Without a solid evaluation strategy to measure the strength of all these elements that connect and fortify your bridge, you'll never truly be able to tell where your training succeeded or failed. If you can't tell where it worked and where it didn't work, then you won't be able to improve your training in the future.

For example, did your employees have a great training experience at Level 1 but didn't really learn anything? If so, you should ramp up your learning content the next time. Did they learn a lot at Level 2 but couldn't apply it in their work for some reason? If so, you can explore why they didn't transfer their learning back to the job and create some action plans to help with the transfer. Did they apply all the trained behaviors at Level 3, but those behaviors weren't properly aligned to impact their critical business metrics? In this case, you should rethink and change the critical skills you're teaching so that they focus on driving only the highest priority business metrics. Did they increase their business metrics at Level 4, but it wasn't enough to offset the cost of the training for Level 5 ROI?

Here, you might seek other delivery modes that can drive similar behavior change and business impact but at a far lower cost. Finally, at Level 6, what are some major reinforcers (manager support, practice labs, asynchronous learning add-ons, etc.) that you can use to maximize that overall transfer, impact, and ROI?

Is Evaluation Built-In to Your Training Platform?

Measuring the success of your L&D efforts doesn't have to be a substantial administrative burden. Training platforms, like Hone, maximize results by adding practice labs, manager support, and more to help track the principal reinforcers. In addition, Hone simplifies the measurement process with its Manager Capability Assessment, which measures L0-L4 data directly from its platform. By finding a training solution like Hone, that couples world-class training with measurable results, your L&D dollars can help you tell the story of their business impact so that the question isn't merely whether your program had an impact but by "how much?".



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The Key to Delivering the Highest-Impact Training

Whether your budget for training is shrinking or growing, evaluating your initiatives (Levels 1 - 6) is the key to delivering the highest-impact training in the most cost-effective way. Whether you are looking to keep your current training, bring in new training, create your training, or completely change the way you deliver training, the one and only way to make and support your decision is by measuring impact. For example, suppose you can squeeze a lot more impact out of the same training dollar by changing your climate.

In that case, you are truly increasing the bottom line for your organization, and tracking your success or failure at each of the six levels tells you how to adjust and reinforce critical aspects of the learner's experience.

By monitoring their journey with an ROI study, you know where to hold their hand a little tighter so they never fall off your bridge and end up safe and sound at your destination with better business results.

Manager Training Programs Produce High "Leadership ROI"

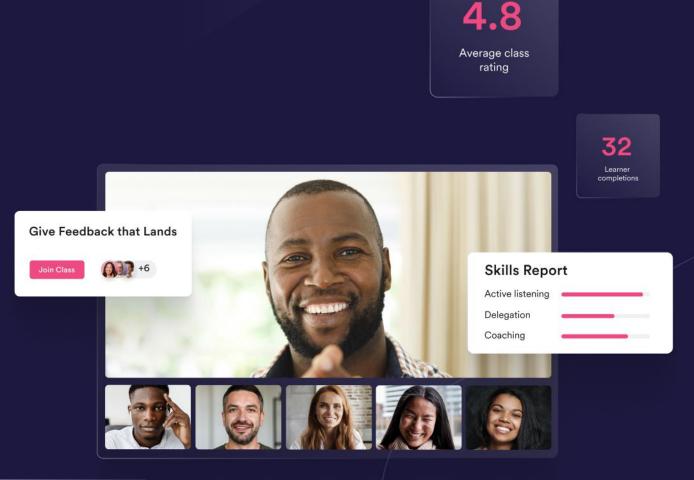
When it comes to ROI, the training that packs the biggest punch is your leader and manager training. Why? Because of the breadth and depth of influence these trainees have on your most important frontline employees. Train one person directly and then indirectly, many other employees will benefit.

When individual contributors increase their effort and show positive behaviors on the job, they become more productive, and their performance improves. However, when leaders and managers grow their effort and improve their behaviors on the job, they not only become more effective, but they have a direct and positive ripple effect on all the employees they lead and influence every day. We call this "Leadership ROI." If captured and measured correctly, the benefit of these leader improvements can result in some stunning returns. 33

Conclusion

In the training industry, there's an intuitive understanding of how a great program or development initiative can impact employee performance and the bottom line. Still, that impact needs to be spelled out in great detail for all stakeholders and business leaders if they are truly going to appreciate the value of training. The contributions and benefits you can add to the business by investing in and developing your people are the most significant source of any competitive advantage a company can have. It's time to start showing these impacts and returns to the top decision-makers at your company, so L&D can rightfully be seen as one of the most business-critical functions in your organization.

About Hone





Hone is the enterprise platform for live online learning. We deliver learning at scale in people skills areas like effective management, leadership, and DEIB. Many of the world's most innovative companies, including Airtable, Aramark, Indeed, Rover, and TomTom, depend on Hone every day to help their teams progress, grow and lead.

Want to learn more? Request a demo at www.honehq.com/demo