
**OUTBOUND TRAINING AND ITS EFFECT ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE- A
REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

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ABSTRACT

This paper in the form of Literature Review is a presentation of the major contributions of past research in the Outbound Training domain. It also serves to analyze the impact of Outbound Training program and the different ways to evaluating this type of training program.

The primary focus here has been to assess the valuable literature available in this space so far to the selection of evaluation methods and its effectiveness. Primarily, research has been conducted to study the effectiveness of managerial training programs and study its impact on employee performance. The valuable insights gathered from this study suggests a scope for future research to assess the evaluation techniques of managerial training programs and suggest ways to overcome the ineffectiveness of current gaps.

Key words: *Outbound training, effectiveness, results, behavior*

An Overview

Outdoor Management Development (OMD) program is gradually being acknowledged as a faster way of developing managerial efficacy. Kurt Hahn was first to employ, an outdoor experience that was created. This experience offered challenges and could be used for improvement of the employee as an individual and also the development of groups and team.

Lawrence Holt, head of a commercial shipping line in 1941, approached Hahn to deal with the crisis of lower endurance rate of young sailors. As per Holt, this problem of sailors was due to their own failure to trust on their own capability. Hahn advocated “adventure” as a training tool which would help youth to mature. He tried to create a similar setting involving those activities which the young sailors used in their day to day work. This activity helped these sailors to introspect, identify and accomplish their capabilities and build trust on them. Hahn’s concept of adventure training may be recapitulated as an activity which -- takes place outside, is designed to help trainees to introspect and determine their skills and strengths, a similar environment is created in which the trainees are expected to function and is based on exciting risky activities. This Outward Bound movement (OMD) started by Hahn continues to be operational in education and corporate world all over the world even today.

Economic slowdown, rapidly changing technology, higher attrition, and mobilization of workforce, younger workforce and many other such challenges have emerged for the Organizations over the past decade. These change agents have redefined the way business was done and have put the best practices to test across the world. Due to these factors companies are struggling to adapt new methodologies and setting up new practices to sustain in the dynamic environment. This uncertain environment has driven organizations to use “education and training” as tools for providing focus, building competency, increasing efficiency and commitment required to manage the “millennial generation” in dynamic organizations.

Employee’s enrollment in training programs have increased over the years in order to develop the skills to sustain in this knowledge economy. Employers are also aggressive on this front and allocate resources (financial and logistical) to encourage employee training programs. Employers do so to remain competitive as well as to retain a skilled workforce.

Companies carry out training programs, both in-house and outdoor, for developing employee skills. Increasingly, companies are cheering the notion of learning outside the work environment called as “Outdoor training programs” or Outdoor Management Development (OMD) program. In this study, Outdoor training program is interchangeably used for Outdoor Management Development (OMD). These Outdoor training programs are expected to create awareness and promote out of the box thinking.

Statement of problem

On one hand, there is increased popularity and spending on outdoor adventure-based training programs while on the other hand critics are strong about its limited advantage. Therefore, research and evaluation is needed to demonstrate the effectiveness of outbound training.

Objectives of the study

- To find if training need assessment is appropriately conducted before designing an Outdoor Training Program for the employees.
- To evaluate if there is a difference in performance of employees in terms of skill and behavior after undergoing Outdoor training programs and
- To establish a relationship between learning, outcome and training need identification of outdoor training program.

Methodology

Secondary data was collected through information published by selected organizations, training institutions, magazines, journals and other databases.

Review of Literature

Alliger, GeorgeM, Tannenbaum, Scott I, Bennett, Winston, Jr, Traver, Holly, Shotland, Allison (1997), elaborated on the framework proposed by Kirkpatrick (1959), who advocated four levels of evaluation technique and this model of training evaluation continues to be the most accepted. In Kirkpatrick's model, evaluation of training effectiveness is typically followed by questioning, effectiveness in terms of reactions, learning, behavior, or results. Thus, these determine the most apt method for evaluating training effectiveness. The first level, "Reaction" is operationalized by using self-report measures. Reaction measures are generally used as evaluation criteria though it is not a suitable substitute.¹

John Bank (1983), reviewed the effective use of the outdoors for management development and concluded that, a lot of work is to be done on constructing the conceptual framework for outdoor development in order to establish its learning intent. Evidence is mostly collected from trainers. It is also from the positive accounts from participants. But then it's important to understand -- the definition of OMD, the training outcomes and what results can it achieve?²

Norman Crawford, (1988), in his research made an attempt to outline the experience and assess the value of a recent outdoor development program. Crawford pointed out that Outdoor management development though provides significant "bite", its main impact may well be in those areas relating to "working with and through other people". And he also emphasized on the importance of on-the-job back-up if participants were to maximize gains from their outdoor experiences.³

Ashraf MagdyAttia, (1988), pointed that a major limitation of training evaluation program is that it produces results that are subjective and not truly quantitative. An important implication of this study was that most companies evaluate the trainee's reaction or feelings about the training program, while very few companies measure knowledge, attitude and results of the trainees. Even if the reaction scores are to be interpreted, there are no cut-off points, standard techniques, benchmarks, norms, and methodology for evaluation.⁴

Honeycutt and Stevenson (1989), also in line with findings mentioned that 38% of sales managers in big companies were unable to evaluate training programs due to restrictions, such as 'time and money' and 'difficulty in obtaining data'. This study proposed further research to examine the relationships between the four levels of the Kirkpatrick model (1959a) as assumed by Newstrom (1978), which states that there is a high sequential inter correlation among the criteria.⁵

Alison J. Smith and John A. Piper, (1990), critically examined the history of evaluation techniques. In this research, they argued that though evaluation is considered important but very little effort is actually put to gauge the impact of the training program.⁶

Tannenbaum and Yukl (1992), also stated that learning of trainees is needed but is not a sufficient measure for change in behavior. In this paper, they stated that learning and behavioral to be conceptually linked and a further research can be carried out to understand it better.⁷

Dainty and Lucas (1992), reemphasized the importance of review process of a training program in transferring the learning experience, and supported the learning cycle proposed by **Kolb et al.(1984)**.⁸

Krouwel and Goodwill(1992), in their study also suggested that the results of outbound training can only be measured by reviewing the experience in which is harnessed. If transfer of learning is to be accomplished, evaluation of the Outbound training processes to attain the desired results and establishing links to the work environment are indispensable. However, over the years, establishing transfer of learning has continued to remain an extremely tricky job.⁹

Philip J. Jones and Clifford Oswick (1993), in their study inferred that, the only reliable way for an organization to attain valid and reliable information, about the resulting training outcomes was likely through the design and execution of its own evaluation process. They advocated that even if the own evaluation process was limited in scope, at least details of these limitations would help those utilizing the results. However, even today, the practice of training evaluation remains as indefinable and mysterious as it did in the 1950s. It is disturbing to see organizations being unable to quantify and accurately measure the impact of learning happening through the trainings after investing huge capital in this management development process.¹⁰

Dominic Irvine and John P. Wilson (1994) critically examined the soundness of OMD proposed in 1941 and its validity for modern era. In this article, the authors pointed that the credibility of OMD is dependent entirely on questionable subjective facts which add to chaos rather than clarity. They identified six elements as the essentials of OMD: The action is expected to be novel, it entails psychological risk, variation in complexity by introducing other components, the work environment can be replicated, performing various assignments without appropriate knowledge of the entire situation, it involves slight expertise; and the most important the experience can be reviewed. An important point here is that this “Outward Bound Movement” requires evaluation. The skills learned during the Outward Bound movement or outbound training should be transmitted from the training atmosphere to the work environment.¹¹

Beryl Badger, Eugene Salder-Smith, Edwin Michie (1997), presented a study on perceptions of the value and effectiveness of Outdoor Training Programs. The study pointed out that the companies believed in this form of training based on anecdote and their own perception but there was no clearly defined answers to its effectiveness. This study proposed a detail oriented and systematic research to prove the effectiveness of Outdoor training programs.¹²

H. Alvin Ng, (2001), in this study analyzed the effectiveness of OMD in Asia. This study involved a critical study of collectivism during Outbound trainings. This study showed that OMD programs had a positive impact on the Asian participants.¹³

Thomas A. Hamilton Cary Cooper (2001), studied the impact of OMD for team building skills. Advantages and disadvantages of OMD were discussed and idea of "experiential component" was discussed.¹⁴

Winfred Arthur Jr., Pamela S. Edens, and Suzanne T. Bell, (2003) recognized many design and evaluation techniques linked to the effectiveness of training, based on pertinent literature. In this study, they focused on evaluation methods, execution of training needs assessment, and the similarity between the task and the training delivery method.¹⁵

Scott D. Williams T. Scott Graham Bud Baker (2003), stressed and supported the uniqueness of Outdoor Training. One of the important question raised in this study was if the outdoor setting was actually affecting the learning experience of trainees. This study primarily focused on devising a model for measuring the ROI and proposed further research in this area.¹⁶

Burke, Veronica; Collins, David (2004), emphasized that though OMD programs are used extensively but there is a lack of empirical evidence to establish the effectiveness of OMD and the actual transfer happening to the workplace after learning through these programs. this study proposed a new framework to evaluate the actual transfer of learning.¹⁷

Burke, Veronica; Collins, David (2004), in another study evaluated the client's perspective of Outbound training program. This study demonstrated little evidence behind designing training programs to achieve effectiveness to optimize effect of OMD. These studies highlighted that providers of the training program and clients lacked an understanding of the pedagogy used in OMD and thus in turn affecting the desired results.¹⁸

Joseph Paul Pulichino (2007) conducted a detailed study of Kirkpatrick's four levels of training evaluation based on the previous training literature. This study was conducted to enable training practitioners to understand the usage and benefits of all levels and Level 3 and 4 in particular. Besides, other interesting findings, one important insight was that Level 3 and 4 continues to be used less frequently.¹⁹

K. Skylar Powell and Serkan Yalcin (2009), in their research pointed out, that there has been very little progress in the efficiency of training program from 1952 through 2002. This study also suggested that though people learn, but the challenge is to develop managers, who apply their learnings, in the work place.²⁰

Diamantidis, Anastasios D; Chatzoglou, Prodromos D (2012), examined the medium-to long-term effects of training programs on Greek organizations where training was used for development. The study results indicate that the design of a training program is the most crucial factor and has a major impact on post-training job performance, followed by trainees' self-efficacy and post-training behavior.²¹

Darrin Kass and Christian Grandzol (2012), studied the value-added benefit of including an outdoor leadership development program called Leadership on the Edge (LOTE) in an experiential learning course in Organizational Behavior. After conducting this study, they felt that training effectiveness can be evaluated if the degree to which learners are able to transfer the skills to their professional and personal lives could be measured. These findings suggest that if reaction feedback from the training program is to be utilized, then acceptable levels of trainee evaluation have to be in place.²²

Giasuddin Bellary, Pulidindi Venugopal & Ganesan (2014), reemphasized that the training program's success depends on the training outcomes. This study also pointed out that although outdoor training is being conducted by many corporate houses, but insufficient research has been done in this area.²³

Findings and Conclusion

Training evaluation still remains an evolving practice; it requires further study and research that will lead to birth of better evaluation instruments, a more reliable and dependable model, and above all an improvement in the discipline of training itself. Outdoor programs offer relevant learning experience (Jones, 1993). As observed by David Pollit (2007), outdoor training helps employees to enhance interpersonal skills, develop technical knowhow and team building skills. The success of the program is based on the desired results. Therefore it

is highly essential that the effectiveness of outdoor training and its effectiveness on employee performance is evaluated. This will turn benefit the training providers as well as the participants of the OMD program and thus in turn effect the bottom-line of the company.

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