

Transfer of Learning



MAQ Exchange

[Note: Along with the talking points given on the notes pages, you will find bracketed instructions for use when presenting this module to participants during a MAQ Exchange.]

[If possible, distribute a copy of *Transfer of Learning: A Guide for Strengthening the Performance of Health Care Workers* to each participant. In the event print copies are not available, consider providing copies on CD-ROM.]

[Prepare flipcharts in advance as specified on the notes pages, including a title sheet that reads: “Transfer of Learning.”]

[Welcome the participants, share appropriate greetings, and establish ground rules for the session.]

In the spirit of a well-designed training event, we have built some interactivity into this presentation and we would like to encourage you to participate!

Before we get started, let me take just a moment to introduce the *Transfer of Learning Guide*.

- This guide contains a wealth of information. It provides a good summary of the concepts covered in this presentation.
- The *Guide* is a joint product developed by Intrah/PRIME and JHPIEGO.
- It is available in English, French and Spanish.

In addition, several interactive versions of the *Guide* are available on CD-ROM, and on the Intrah/PRIME and JHPIEGO websites.

[Give the the Intrah/PRIME and JHPIEGO web addresses where the Guide can be found online:

<http://www.intrah.org/tol/index.html>

<http://www.reproline.jhu.edu/english/6read/6pi/tol/index.htm>]



Objectives/Major Concepts

- ◆ Describe transfer of learning and why it is important
- ◆ Discuss factors that affect transfer and learner performance
- ◆ Describe key strategies that can be used before, during and after training
- ◆ Discuss issues related to monitoring and evaluating learning transfer

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After taking part in this presentation, you will be able to:

- Describe transfer of learning, why it is important, and why it might be important to you
- List performance factors that affect the learners' abilities to implement their new skills at their work site
- Describe key strategies that can be used before, during and after a training intervention by supervisors, trainers, learners and their co-workers
- Discuss issues related to monitoring and evaluating learning transfer (For example, what techniques can be used to document progress and impact?)

[Ask the participants: "Are there any questions about the objectives? Are there any related topics you would like to make sure we discuss during this session?" List any additional suggestions on a flipchart.]



Why do we do training?

- ◆ To ensure workers have the knowledge and skills to do the job.

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[Ask the participants:] “Why do we do training?” [Take a few suggestions from the participants before advancing the slide to reveal the answer to the question.]

The primary reason we do training is to ensure that workers have the required knowledge and skills to do the job. However, training is usually only one part of the solution. Other factors can affect worker performance on the job.

On a related note, you may be wondering why we say “transfer of learning” rather than “transfer of training.” We have deliberately chosen the term “learning” to remind us that the focus of the intervention should be on the *learners*. We are focusing on what the *learners* need to do their job and how best to assist the *learners* to gain that knowledge and skill.



What is Transfer of Learning?

...ensuring that the knowledge and skills acquired during a learning intervention are applied on the job...

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This is a simple definition of what is meant by the phrase “transfer of learning.”

[Read the definition from the slide. Mention that this definition is included in the *Transfer of Learning Guide*.]

[Ask the participants:] “Have you ever attended a training event and returned to your work but never implemented what you learned?” [Ask for a show of hands.]

[Tell the participants:] Research has shown that, typically, less than 30% of what people learn is actually ever used on the job.

[Ask the participants:] “What do you need to help you use what you learn when you return to work?” [List participants’ suggestions on a flipchart.]



Why focus on transfer?

- ◆ Improves quality of client services
- ◆ Protects training investments
- ◆ Encourages and empowers learners
- ◆ Improves accountability for implementation
- ◆ Enhances likelihood that interventions will target specific needs
- ◆ Helps supervisors keep current

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Transfer of learning is important for supervisors, trainers, learners and co-workers because:

- Transfer of learning is in the best interest of clients. Health care workers participate in a learning event to acquire new knowledge and skills to improve their ability to meet the needs of their clients. Improving the transfer of learning enhances the quality of services—and may lead to increased client satisfaction.
- Learning interventions can be expensive. Improving the transfer of learning helps to protect these investments.
- Learners are motivated to perform well at their jobs when they are able to apply what they have learned. The support and guidance of supervisors, trainers and co-workers can encourage and empower learners to make changes and improve performance.
- Supervisors and learners are more accountable for implementing new knowledge and skills if there is early agreement about what will occur after training. An action plan outlines these agreements.
- Investing in the outcome of training helps trainers to prepare interventions that meet the specific needs of learners and health care delivery sites.
- Although supervisors may not be proficient in all of the clinical services provided by the health workers they supervise, being involved in the transfer of learning process can help them stay up to date.



What are the barriers to transferring learning?

- ◆ Lack of reinforcement on the job
- ◆ Difficulties in the work environment
- ◆ Non-supportive organizational culture
- ◆ Learners' perception that new skills are impractical
- ◆ Learners' discomfort with change
- ◆ Separation from the instructional source
- ◆ Poor instructional design and delivery
- ◆ Negative peer pressure

Source: Newstrom 1983.

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In the typical work environment, there are a number of barriers that make transfer of new skills difficult. John Newstrom generated this particular list in 1983. [Source: Newstrom JW. 1983. The management of unlearning: Exploding the “clean slate” fallacy. *Training and Development Journal* 1983 37(8):36-39.]

[Take a moment to read the list and add other examples, as appropriate.]

If you have worked in training, you can relate to these difficulties and may even have other suggestions for the list. [Call the participants' attention to the items on the flipchart that they proposed earlier as what they needed to help them use what they learned when they returned to work.]

In most cases, the barriers identified by Newstrom represent the opposite of what learners themselves have identified as helpful in transferring learning.



What is my greatest performance block?

I would perform better if:

1. I knew exactly what was expected of me.
2. I received regular feedback about how I was doing, compared to what was expected.
3. I had the right tools to do my job and a work environment that suited my job.
4. I had some incentives to excel (e.g., recognition).
5. I had better skills and knowledge about how to do my job.
6. I had a supportive supervisor or manager.

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Adapted from Stolovitch and Keeps 1999, 23-7

[Display this slide as you facilitate the activity described in the notes pages for slides 7 and 8.]

[Activity: What is my greatest performance block? This activity is adapted from Stolovitch HD and EJ Keeps. 1999. *Getting Results Through Performance Consulting*. (Packet of workshop handouts.) It requires Post-It notes and a flipchart that displays a matrix like the one shown on slide 8.]

[Instructions: Give each participant a Post-It Note. Ask the participants to reflect on their own work situations/environments. Ask each participant to complete the following statement using the single most appropriate choice from the six responses listed on slide 7: I would perform better if: (*choose only one*).

Ask the participants to choose one response from 1-6 and write it on their Post-Its.]



Performance Factors Matrix

1. Expectations	2. Feedback	3. Tools
4. Incentives	5. Skills & Knowledge	6. Organizational Support

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Adapted from Stolovitch and Keeps 1999, 23-8

[Activity Instructions (cont.) When the participants are ready, ask them to place their Post-Its on the prepared flipchart in the cell of the matrix that matches their selection. (Note: If you have more than about 50 participants, you may have to ask participants to raise their hands so you can take a quick vote on each number and then record the numbers on the flipchart.) After the Post-It Notes are in the matching cells, point out to the participants that these six categories relate to the factors most often associated with good performance. Also point out the variety of factors given by the group.]

These six categories relate to the factors most often associated with good performance. Depending on the situation, a variety of factors may be identified for the purpose of improving performance. In our field, the vast majority of interventions that are undertaken to improve performance involve training.

[Point out that, as evidenced by the group's responses on the chart, it is obvious that training is not always the most appropriate intervention for improving performance.]

From your own experience, you would probably agree that training is not always the most appropriate intervention for improving performance. As much as possible, we must determine the root cause of performance problems and consider a variety of interventions to improve worker performance and use training only when it's appropriate (that is, for closing knowledge and skills gaps).



What performance factors affect transfer of learning?

- ◆ Job expectations
- ◆ Performance feedback
- ◆ Physical environment and tools
- ◆ Motivation
- ◆ Skills and knowledge
- ◆ Organizational support

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Not surprisingly, the same factors that affect overall worker performance also affect how well learning is transferred to the job. As we saw on the previous two slides, a number of factors affect worker performance. These same factors influence how well learning transfers to the job.

For example,

- Are there clear job expectations? Do learners know how and under what circumstances they will be expected to apply what they have learned?
- Do learners receive feedback from their supervisor (and others) on the performance of their new skills? Feedback is especially important if learners are still working toward complete mastery of a new skill.
- Do learners have the physical environment and tools they need (for example, supplies and instruments) to apply the new knowledge and skills they have acquired during training?
- Are learners motivated to apply the new skills? Does applying their new skills make their job easier or more satisfying?
- Have learners acquired knowledge and learned skills that are immediately applicable in the site where they work? Or, on the other hand, are they trying to figure out how to adapt what they have learned to fit the reality of their situation?
- Do learners have support from the entire organization to help them implement the new skills and techniques they have learned? Has the administration made the necessary adaptations to processes and procedures to support the changes that they hope to institute through staff training?

Well-designed training interventions should consider the impact of these factors. When necessary, tailored non-training interventions should be designed to facilitate and ensure the success of training interventions.

Although you and your organization may not have the capability to design and implement specialized non-training interventions, it is important to consider the impact of all performance factors on learners' ability to apply what they have learned. The key to success for any type of intervention is the support that the organization provides to ensure proper implementation through ongoing monitoring and updates.



What is the TOL process?

...an interrelated series of tasks performed by supervisors, trainers, learners and co-workers before, during and after a learning intervention in order to maximize transfer of knowledge and skills and to improve job performance...

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[Read the definition from the slide. Mention that this definition is included in the *Transfer of Learning Guide*.]

The process is usually presented in a matrix or grid that lists suggested tasks that each stakeholder should perform before, during and after a training intervention.



The Transfer of Learning Matrix

	Before Learning	During Learning	After Learning
Supervisors			
Trainers			
Learners			
Co-workers			

43 suggested strategies

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This matrix shows how “transfer of learning strategies” are typically described in the training and learning literature. (A detailed version of this matrix is included in the *Transfer of Learning Guide*.) The basic matrix is designed to share strategies that can be used before, during and after a typical training intervention by supervisors, trainers, learners and their co-workers. You will notice that the strategies in the matrix take into account the performance factors that we just described.

The strategies shared in the matrix apply to any type of learning approach and combination (or blended) approaches, including classroom-based, on-the-job, group or self-paced. They can also be adapted for use in a variety of supervisory arrangements.

One of the underlying themes that you’ll notice in the strategies suggested in the matrix is that of encouraging learners to be proactive and engage their supervisors, trainers, co-workers and their entire organization to support them in the application of their learning. We advocate taking active learning to the limit!

Rather than describe each of the 40+ strategies that are included in the *Transfer of Learning Guide*’s matrix, we have summarized and will review the key strategies that should be used before, during and after a typical training intervention by supervisors, trainers, learners and their co-workers.

Before we start looking at some of the key strategies that should be used before, during and after an intervention, let us take a close look an action plan—a tool that, when used correctly, is used during all stages of a training intervention.



Action Plan

- ◆ Describes steps to maximize transfer of learning
- ◆ Used by learner, supervisor, trainer and co-workers
- ◆ Helps track expectations, commitments and resources
- ◆ Initiated before training, refined during training and implemented after training

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An action plan is a written document that describes the steps that supervisors, trainers, learners and co-workers develop to help maximize the transfer of learning. Action plans can be a tool for keeping track of expectations, commitments and the resources needed to accomplish learning goals.

A preliminary action plan is used before the start of the intervention to ensure agreement about the expectations for the learning intervention for all of the stakeholders including supervisors, trainers, learners, and co-workers.

During the learning intervention, the action plan is refined by the learner and the trainer to document exactly how the new knowledge and skills will be implemented at the work site.

After the intervention, the detailed written document is used to share the plan with supervisors, co-workers and other stakeholders to ensure that everyone is clear about the expectations and about their responsibilities for ensuring that the learners receive the support that they need to be successful.

The action plan should be a living document that is revised as necessary to reflect accomplishments and changes to the plan.



Action Plan Key Elements

Action Plan				
Specific Areas to Improve:				
Problems to Overcome:				
Detailed Steps	Responsible Persons	Resources	Date/Time	Changes Expected
Commitment of Support Team:				

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This graphic depicts some of the key elements that should be included in an action plan. At a minimum, an action plan should include a description of the specific areas to improve and detailed steps for achieving the changes in those areas.

It is also helpful to identify any problems that might interfere with achieving the goals so that steps can be taken to correct them.

The more clearly you communicate with responsible persons, document resources required, due dates and expected changes, the more likely it is that the learner will achieve the desired performance.

You can find a completed action plan and a blank plan in the *Transfer of Learning Guide*.



Key Strategies

Before Learning

- ◆ Ensure problem can be “fixed” with training
- ◆ Select the “right” trainees
- ◆ Establish agreements about intervention goals

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- As I said before, it is very important to consider the root cause of performance gaps. Do whatever type of assessment is necessary to understand the performance need.
- When performance issues are carefully investigated and interventions to correct problems are properly designed, the selection of the “right” trainees is obvious. Avoid the temptation to use training as a “perk” or benefit. This is not fair to anyone involved.
- As a continuation of the stakeholders’ discussion of the performance gaps and what the desired performance is, ensure that all the stakeholders, including the supervisor, trainer, learner and others at the work site agree about the intended goals of the training intervention. Everyone should be involved in the discussion and planning to ensure “buy-in” and mutual understanding of the goals. All involved need to be moving in the same direction toward the same ultimate performance goal.



Key Strategies *(continued)*

Before Learning *(continued)*

- ◆ Design the “learner support system”
 - learning materials
 - interactive activities
 - facilitators/peers
 - administrative support

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• “Learner support system” is a term used to describe the infrastructure and resources designed to facilitate the learner’s achievement of the performance goals and ensure that transfer of learning occurs. Put simply, a learner support system is the collection of strategies, derived from the matrix, used to support the learner. Each intervention has its own unique collection of strategies that are designed and put in place prior to the start of the intervention to support the learner before, during and after the learning intervention. Among other things, a “learner support system” may include:

1. Learning materials that are specially designed to guide the learner through the learning intervention
2. Interactive activities that present the learning content in a manner that promotes learning and transfer to the job
3. Opportunities for feedback and problem-solving from facilitators and learning peers
4. Administrative support such as work time for study and practice, and tools and equipment

Different types of interventions will require different types of support systems; the suggestions mentioned in the matrix can be adapted to support learners in many different types of learning interventions.



Key Strategies *(continued)*

During learning

- ◆ Match training activities to intervention goals
- ◆ Give learners the time to learn

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•It goes without saying that if everyone is moving toward the same performance goal that the training intervention should “teach” with those goals in mind. The course must be designed and conducted so that learners have opportunities to learn and practice the desired performance and get feedback about how they are performing. The content of the intervention and the related activities should be tailored to the specific performance goals. Do not expect learners to “make it work” or to figure out “how to make what they are learning useful at work” on their own. It is the responsibility of the entire team, including the learner, to ensure that the intervention is sound and meaningful.

•Learning new knowledge and skills takes time. Make sure that learners are given uninterrupted time to plan, study and practice the new skills.



Key Strategies *(continued)*

After learning

- ◆ Provide ongoing support and resources
- ◆ Monitor learner progress
- ◆ Make adjustments as needed

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•Ensuring that learners are followed up and supported after an intervention is one of the most important investments that can be made. Technically, it really should not be considered “after” the intervention. In a well-designed intervention, the things that might be described as “after” are really part of the intervention. There really should not be a line between “during” and “after.”

•One of the best ways to provide ongoing support is to monitor learner progress so that “support” can be targeted to the learner’s, or more accurately the worker’s, changing needs.

•As the situation evolves, make adjustments in how the goals of the intervention will be achieved. Use the written action plan to document changes. It is important to make adjustments and involve all the stakeholders in the decisions so that everyone remains clear about the goals and expectations and what their individual responsibilities are.

That concludes the quick summary of the important take-home messages from the matrix in the *Transfer of Learning Guide*. Now let’s take a look at some issues related to monitoring and evaluating learning transfer.



Measuring the Effectiveness of Learning Interventions

- ◆ Performance on the job
- ◆ Success of approach
- ◆ Appropriateness of the materials and resources

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Ideally, every training and learning intervention will include a plan for monitoring and evaluating the success of the intervention. You will notice that the matrix includes several specific suggestions regarding assessment, monitoring and evaluation that should be incorporated as appropriate.

- Transfer of learning can only be measured by evaluating performance on the job. Although using pre- and post- knowledge and skills tests can tell you whether learners have gained knowledge and skills, these tests do not indicate whether the learner can perform on the job. To document transfer, some observation of a learner's performance on the job, against a set standard for desired performance, must be conducted.

- A well-integrated monitoring and evaluation plan can also include mechanisms that permit designers to determine the success of the approach and make adjustments as necessary to the design of future interventions.

- It is possible to create opportunities to evaluate the appropriateness of the materials so that they can be adapted as necessary. You can also monitor other resources to determine if they are adequate—such as whether facilitators are sufficiently skilled and whether transportation and communication were suited to the learners and the support team.



Summary

- ◆ Transfer of learning is important in maximizing the effect of training
- ◆ There are a number of factors that affect transfer and learner performance
- ◆ There are key strategies that you can use before, during and after training
- ◆ Monitor and evaluate learning transfer to document that transfer has occurred

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[Review the four summary points on the slide. Ask the participants if there are any questions about transfer of learning. If time permits, ask the participants to share plans for implementing transfer of learning strategies. Thank participants for attending the session and indicate that you will be available following the session to answer any specific questions.]