

# Getting Training to

STOP

# THE PROBLEM WITH TRAINING

## IT'S INNATELY SLIPPERY

Why do we send people to training? Because we want them to perform better on the job in some way. Simple. Right?

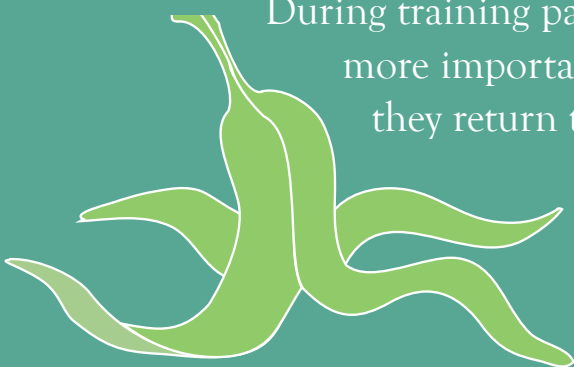
Not necessarily. Training costs us money from our precious budgets. We also lose our people and their contributions to our workforce for several days. The least we should expect is to recoup our investment with increased performance when they get back to their desks. But, this rarely happens, not because the training wasn't good but because it was not followed by effective support.

All good training courses provide participants with new knowledge and skills in specific domains of expertise. They also give the participants hope that the new ways of doing things will work in their job environments and bring about better results.

During training participants learn how to do things differently and more importantly **WANT** to do things differently. But when they return to their work, participants are confronted with

the familiarity of their job environment. The familiarity and pace of work in concert with the uncomfortableness of trying to do things differently – pushes training participants back into their old familiar routines.

Training is innately slippery because it's so hard to actually put it into practice. But what if there was a way to get training to stick?



# WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT HABITS

Charles Duhigg wrote a fantastic book called *The Power of Habit*. In it he explains that habits are useful to us because they allow us to follow routines on autopilot and expend less mental energy. Much of what we do on a daily basis is habit driven. In our personal lives there are habits such as brushing our teeth, when and what we eat, and our morning routines. In our work lives habits can be found in areas such as when we engage with email, how we start our week on a project, and how we process certain requests.

Obviously, there are both good and bad habits. Duhigg suggests that when attempting to get rid of a bad habit the approach one takes is exactly the same as one who is attempting to start a good habit. All habits involve a **cue**, a **routine**, and a **reward**.



## CUES

Initiate the start of a habit. They can be emotional or physical. Examples include: hunger, anxiety, time of day, a request, a sound, or an assignment.



## ROUTINES

What we do in response to the cue. They are the ingrained, unconscious actions that we take when presented with a cue. For example: searching for something sweet after a meal, pulling out your mobile phone when you get bored, vacuuming the house after guest leave, and working out as soon as you wake up.



## REWARDS

What satisfies us and give us joy after we follow the routines. Examples of rewards are that smooth, fresh, crisp feeling we have after brushing our teeth; the buzz you get after a hard drink; and, the pride we feel when we cross off a task or finish a project.

# CREATING HABITS THROUGH POST-TRAINING SUPPORT

## HOW TO GET TRAINING TO STICK

In order to give training participants the best chance of transitioning their new knowledge and skills back to their jobs we need to help them create good work habits. That means we need to identify new cues, establish new routines, and institute new rewards.





## CUES

At the end of a training course participants should be asked to document what they will do differently when they get back to their jobs. Specifically, they need to identify for themselves, what cues they will acknowledge so they can insert a new routine. These can be based on emotions they feel or physical signs they experience. Participants should share this information with their manager.



## ROUTINES

Once participants are back on the job they need to be reminded of the key knowledge and skills that they just learned, so that the new routines are top of mind for them. That way if a cue presents itself participants are more prepared to follow the new routine. Desk-top references, flash cards and weekly reminder emails are good applications of this. In addition, participants need to have access to tools or templates that they can use to ease the burden of following the new routines. It is counterproductive to train someone in something new without giving him or her the tools to make it happen.



## REWARDS

Finally, a participant's manager needs to be involved to provide rewards in the form of accountability, encouragement, and praise. That means the manager has to be equipped to ask the right questions to identify if the new behaviors are being practiced. Some type of background information on the training course will help the manager fulfill this role. Then they can offer rewards in the form of encouragement for following the new routines and praise participants for producing better work results.

Many people think that training is the end all of performance improvement. As you can now see it is just the means to an end. It sets a training participant towards practicing new behaviors and producing greater work results. If your goal is getting training to stick, then you need as much work and attention towards post-training support as you need towards coordinating the training in the first place.

The increased performance you are looking for will be evident and validate your foresight to invest in post-training support. Then real change will begin to happen within your organization.