

## A Tribute to the Legacy of Donald Kirkpatrick

Eugene J. Monaco, Executive Director and Public Service Professor, Professional Development Program

Donald Kirkpatrick, a leader in the field of learning and development, is recognized as the creator of the framework for a system, process, and metrics to assess the impact of training. Kirkpatrick's framework has proven to be a remarkable contribution that has influenced the field for more than half a century.

Kirkpatrick passed away in May 2014 at the age of 90, leaving behind a legacy that not only shaped the field of learning and development during the major part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also reflected his lifelong commitment to improving training outcomes. Replicating his impact on the field of learning, development, and training will be unlikely because his framework, which so effectively measures training impact, is without a doubt a formidable contribution and will forever be his epithet.

This issue of the PDP Communiqué is dedicated to Kirkpatrick and the numerous contributions he made to the training profession.

Kirkpatrick's work, aptly named the Four-Level Training Evaluation Model, has become the benchmark for evaluating training. The four levels are:

1	Reaction How satisfied is the learner with the experience?
2	Learning How much knowledge and skill did the learner acquire as a result of the experience?
3	Behavior How much has the learner changed as a result of the experience?
4	Results What impact has the change produced on the organization?

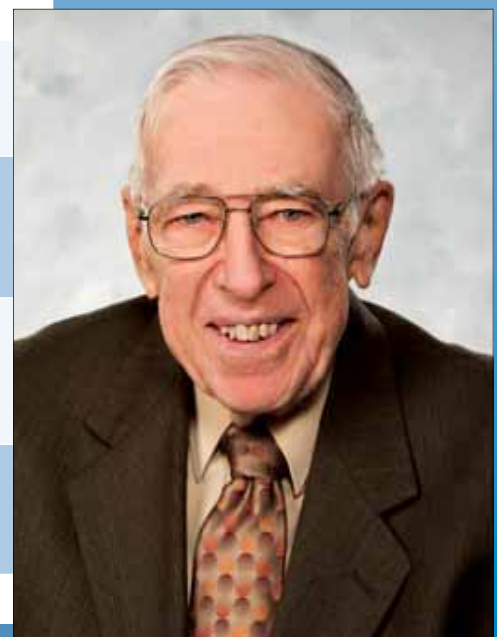
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A Newsletter from the Professional Development Program, Rockefeller College



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Donald Kirkpatrick, creator of the Four-Level Training Evaluation Model

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# PDP and Four-Plus Decades of the Kirkpatrick Model

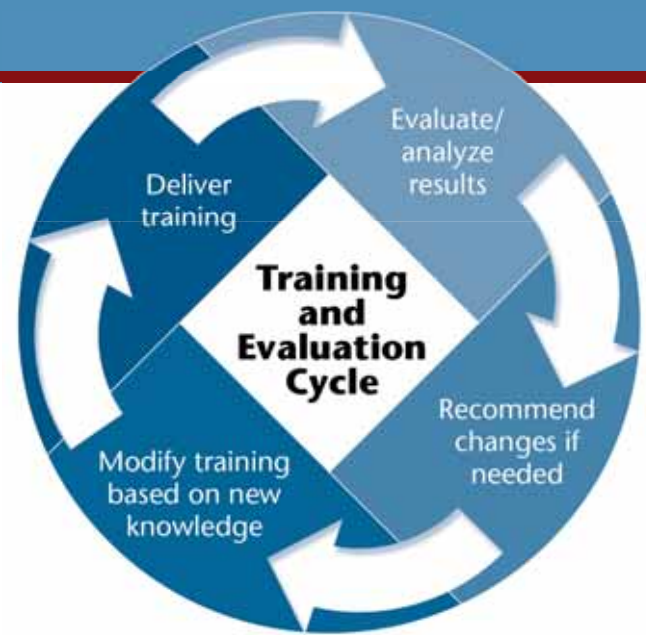
Susan Gieryic, Senior Research Scientist  
Evaluation Unit

In the 1970s, PDP began using the Kirkpatrick Four-Level Training Evaluation Model<sup>1</sup> as a guiding framework to evaluate the effectiveness of its different continuing professional education and training programs. PDP continues to use Kirkpatrick's evaluation model, which remains as relevant and viable as when it was first introduced by Donald Kirkpatrick in 1959. This article summarizes the history of PDP's on-going evaluation activities within the paradigm of the Kirkpatrick Model.

Kirkpatrick's Level 1 evaluations are the most straightforward of the four sequential levels. This level measures the learner's reaction or satisfaction with the training program and provides immediate results. PDP has used Level 1 evaluations for nearly all of its training programs for over four decades. A standardized Participant Reaction Questionnaire (PRQ) is completed by the learner at the end of the training activity. Initially, the PRQ was designed to evaluate classroom training; however, with the development of PDP's online and web-based trainings, an additional PRQ was created to capture the unique aspects of online training. The PRQs consist of close-ended questions that allow learners to rate the training using a scale and opened-ended questions that allow learners to provide their own response. In the past few years, PDP has used QSR International NVivo for Windows<sup>2</sup>, a qualitative computer software program, to analyze open-ended PRQ data. This rich qualitative data provides useful insights from learners in their own words.

Over the years, a majority of PDP training programs have used Level 2 evaluations, particularly for programs that are offered multiple times. This level measures the amount of knowledge and/or skills learned by trainees as a result of the training program. Knowledge tests are administered to learners before and after the training. This method is the most commonly used at PDP, with a post-test only design being used less often. A multiple choice format is employed for nearly all tests with knowledge questions and questions are based on the training's learning objectives. Pre/post mean scores and learning gains are calculated for training groups. PDP uses Level 2 results to gauge if any aspects of the training can be improved in the future and if trainees are attaining the expected level of learning.

In recent years, PDP has increasingly focused on developing and conducting Level 3 evaluations because there is a



On-going program evaluation is central for assessing project effectiveness and making informed decisions, whether you are creating new or modifying existing training.

pressing need to demonstrate the positive transfer of training knowledge to the workplace via data driven evidence. This level presents several challenges and is more difficult to conduct than Levels 1 and 2. PDP has developed several Level 3 evaluations for classroom and online training programs and continues to design these evaluations for an increasing number of programs. PDP's current Level 3 evaluations use follow-up surveys that are sent to learners 45 days after completion of the training. Learners self-report the extent to which they have been using the training knowledge and/or skills in their jobs. Results from these evaluations indicate that learners are using the new knowledge and skills on the job. Future plans for this level include conducting follow-up surveys with the learners' supervisors for their input.

Level 4 evaluations, determining the results or impact of training on the organization, are the most challenging evaluations to conduct. PDP has not used this level but it remains a goal.

For over four decades, the Kirkpatrick Four-Level Training Evaluation Model has served as a valuable method to systematically conduct evaluation of PDP's educational and training programs. Level 1 and 2 evaluations continue to be important tools that provide informative results. PDP has progressively increased its design and use of Level 3 evaluations to meet the growing needs of our sponsors. The evaluation of training activities and programs is essential for providing accountability, determining if objectives have been met, monitoring and adjusting training programs, providing results to our sponsors, and assessing the impact of training programs. **PDP**

# Evaluation Initiatives at the Public Service Workshops Program

Lina Rincón<sup>3</sup>, Research Scientist  
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In its working partnership between the NYS Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER) and the Public Employees Federation (AFL-CIO) (PEF), the Public Service Workshops Program (PSWP) provides a wide range of training and professional development programs for PEF-represented and Management/Confidential employees. This training is delivered in different occupational areas, ranging from accounting to education, health care, engineering, information technology, law, and counseling, as well as training in more general workforce skills.

In 2014, PDP launched various projects to enhance the evaluation of PSWP's training programs. PDP's goal was to understand the impact that our workshops and special training programs have on participants and their workplaces. We used Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model to devise our assessment strategies and instruments. Our current evaluation program addresses the first three levels of evaluation in the Kirkpatrick model.

## Evaluation of Workshops

This year, PDP started administering learning gain self-assessment surveys for all of PSWP's workshops. In these self-assessments, we asked participants to rate their knowledge level on specific learning objectives before and after participating in a workshop. We created an online survey that we linked to our existing Level 1 participant reaction questionnaire survey. These surveys were developed and administered through Questionmark<sup>4</sup>, a commercial evaluation and assessment software.

PDP calculated the percentage change between the pre- and post-workshop average ratings of these assessments and found that the *self-reported* impact of PSWP's workshops on participants' learning gains was positive. For example, participants in technology-related workshops reported a perceived increase in knowledge of 70%, and participants in writing workshops reported a 30% perceived increase in knowledge. In the aggregate, self-reports of increased knowledge for all PSWP's workshops rose by approximately 45%.

## Office of Mental Health Professional Writing Skills Program

Between April and June, PDP organized and delivered a six-day writing skills program for selected Office of Mental

Health (OMH) employees. In order to evaluate how well participants mastered the learning objectives, they were required to write a pre-program essay and a post-program essay. PDP and the course instructor designed a rubric that was used to evaluate both assignments.

PDP calculated the normalized learning gain<sup>5</sup> between the pre- and post-program essay scores and determined that the program was able to improve participants' writing abilities by 33% when compared with their pre-program essay performance. When looking at specific learning objectives, the results show that participants increased their ability to write clear and concise essays by 60%. They also improved their ability to present a well-developed thesis by 40%.

OMH was pleased with the evaluation process and results. The next *OMH Professional Writing Skills Program* learning gain evaluation will implement pre- and post-program essay evaluations, as well as participants' self-assessments of their learning gain. We will also collect detailed data about participants' previous writing knowledge and skills and compare it to their knowledge and skills after the program. Knowing where individuals' knowledge levels are *before* a program will better enable us to more accurately measure individual improvement levels, and thus allow us to comprehend the aggregate analysis of the data.

## Special Projects

In order to demonstrate the impact of training programs on state agencies and their employees, PDP is gathering higher level training evaluation data. Level 3 evaluation components were added to two of PSWP's special training programs this year, including the *Leadership Development Program (LDP)* and the *NYS Strategic Human Resources Management Training Program*. Special projects are often longer than regular workshops and are offered to select groups of participants. They also include detailed assignments and projects.

PDP conducted an online survey with the supervisors of the *LDP* participants ninety days after the program's completion. The goal of this survey was to determine how well the knowledge and skills acquired in the program were used on the job, according to their supervisors. The evaluation results revealed that employees' participation in the program had an immediate, positive effect on their workplaces. For example, supervisors reported that their employees exhibited better leadership and communication skills after their participation in the program.

PDP's evaluation unit uses training materials that education providers and PSWP staff design in order to develop Level 3 evaluations that align with specific learning objectives and deliverables. Training curricula, homework assignments, and project guidelines that help trainees apply the knowledge and skills acquired in the training are among

# Learning, Monitoring, and Evaluation are Fundamental Worldwide

In March 2014, PDP's Eugene Monaco and John Thompson, along with George Obhai, Kenyan Monitoring and Evaluation expert, co-facilitated a three-day workshop entitled "CPST Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Workshop" for the Center for Parliamentary Studies and Training (CPST) at the Center for International Development in Kenya.

The goal of the workshop was to improve the performance of public service employees by increasing Parliament's use of monitoring and evaluation programs. CPST and the Kenyan Parliament recognized that, without proper monitoring and evaluation tools, they cannot carry out their mandates in an efficient, effective manner.

In working with the CPST, the challenges of establishing and operating any (new) organization were clearly evident. Common questions emerge as organizations evaluate their practices: Who are we? Where are we going? Can we get there cheaper, faster, and better? How will we know when we get there?

Lessons from this workshop highlight how fundamental monitoring and evaluation are; it is difficult to manage or change what you don't monitor or evaluate. Donald Kirkpatrick knew this and developed a robust model for monitoring and evaluating training and adult learning. Thanks to the Kirkpatrick Model, PDP is better at managing and adapting to meet the needs of its consumers. **PDP**

The workshop concluded with the following key points from participants:

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## Training

- Teaching and training are only effective if they promote learning.
- Learning is constructed, active, reflective, collaborative, inquiry-based, and evolving.
- Active learning requires mental and physical participation.
- Evaluation tools should be used consistently by all the trainers, and trainers should share the feedback with participants.
- Trainers should self-assess their trainings and use the knowledge gained for self-improvement.

## Planning

- Monitoring and evaluating training begins with curriculum design.
- Good objectives are those that can be clearly measured and evaluated for effectiveness.
- Using an ideal vision is the basis for your planning.
- There should be no assumption that what worked before will work now.
- A problem well defined is a problem half solved.
- Differentiate between ends and means.

## Questions

- Quality questions lead to knowledge that is more useful and allow us to take actions that are more effective.
- Questions open the door to dialogue and discovery.
- Questions invite creativity and breakthrough thinking.
- Questions can lead to movement, action, and change by generating creative insights on key issues.

## Staffing

- Competency is about a specific range of skill, knowledge, and ability to do something successfully.
- Staff should be helped to expand their capacity within their various areas of specialization.
- Change should be encouraged in an organization.
- Teamwork is important for the success of any organization.

## Assessing Needs

- A good system monitors and evaluates itself.
- Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is about processes and outcomes. It is driven by data and focuses on client feedback.
- Need is defined as a gap in results.
- Making assumptions should be avoided when carrying out a needs assessment.
- Monitoring and evaluation information is only useful if it is used.



PDP with CPST Delegation in Kenya

## A Tribute to the Legacy of Donald Kirkpatrick

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Kirkpatrick first created the framework of the Four-Level Training Evaluation Model while working on his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin in 1953. At that time, he little knew the lasting impact that this model would have. One remarkable feature of the Four Levels is the ease with which the model is comprehended and remembered. Perhaps this is because, at the time of its inception, it provided a much needed solution for measuring and evaluating training programs and was simple, logical, and innovative. Its focus on outcomes (i.e., impact of learning) rather than processes (i.e., how well the trainer delivered X, Y, or Z content, or how easy it was to register, etc.) resonated with educators at the time.

An interesting feature of the model and the attribute that makes it most useful is the notion that you always start with the end in mind and work backwards by identifying the desired training outcomes that will measure employee job performance. This serves as the guide to building the course design, course development model, and delivery methods. The approach of focusing on results helped demonstrate to management how employees actually apply learning to the job in order to increase their performance outcomes.

After receiving his doctorate, Kirkpatrick began to present his model at conferences and in workshops across the country, and in 1959, the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), now known as the Association for Talent Development (ATD), asked him to author a paper articulating his evaluation model in the monthly ASTD journal. The rest is history as the Four-Level Training Evaluation Model became assimilated in the training and development world. The model became widely used and continues to be universally

accepted as the most effective way to measure training outcomes.

Today almost all organizations engage in Level 1 (reaction) and Level 2 (learning) evaluations as part of their assessment process. Very few have been able to successfully implement Level 3 (behavior); far fewer can implement Level 4 (results) to evaluate the organizational impact of their programs. Granted, Level 3 and Level 4 have always been difficult to achieve without a resource commitment and buy-in from supervisors and upper level management. This is troubling because when we don't measure results, we don't ever know if the training actually made a difference on organizational performance. Although not a criticism of the model but of the employer's commitment to earnestly measure the overall behavior change of employees as it directly relates to their job performance in meeting organizational goals, there remains a need for organizational engagement and commitment. Yes, much has been done since the model was first introduced in the late 1950s but much more work remains to be done to realize the extraordinary vision that Kirkpatrick brought to the profession.

Training professionals throughout the world are deeply indebted to the work of Kirkpatrick. Honoring his legacy will mean striving to integrate Levels 3 and 4 evaluations into the organizations that they serve and committing to making the Kirkpatrick Four-Level Training Evaluation Model a reality. **PDP**



Eugene J. Monaco

## Evaluation Initiatives at the Public Service Workshops Program

Continued from page 3

these items. PDP plans to use qualitative methods in future Level 3 evaluations to be able to capture richer data about the impact of special training programs.

This year's evaluation initiatives have proven fruitful; we have been better able to demonstrate the impact of PSWP's training programs. PDP will continue to enhance PSWP's evaluation projects by using innovative data collection techniques and closely collaborating with vendors and sponsors. **PDP**

- 1 The Kirkpatrick Four Levels® Copyright 2009–2014 Kirkpatrick Partners, LLC. All rights reserved.
- 2 NVivo is a registered trademark with © QSR International Pty Ltd 2014.
- 3 The author wants to thank Susan Gieryic and Jim Bonville for their suggestions.
- 4 Copyright © 1995–2014 Questionmark Corporation and/or Questionmark Computing Limited. All rights reserved.
- 5 While percent change measures the difference between the pre- and post-test scores, the normalized learning gain is the ratio of the group's scores to the maximum possible rating score.

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## News and Views

### PDP Receives 2014 APEX Award

PDP was awarded a 2014 APEX Award for Publication Excellence for Most Improved Print Media. This award was given for three of the *Youth in Progress Need to Know Series*: “Are you a Native American youth in care?,” “Human Trafficking,” and “Managing Your Money.” APEX Awards are based on excellence in graphic design, editorial content, and the ability to achieve overall communications excellence. The *Need to Know Series* are youth-focused, topic-specific, informational guides that address specific needs and are developed for foster care youth about things they need to know. **PDP**



### Dr. Philip McCallion Awarded PDP’s 2014 Distinguished Continuing Professional Education Leadership Award of Excellence

PDP is proud to recognize Dr. Philip McCallion, Distinguished Professor, as the 2014 recipient of PDP’s Distinguished Continuing Professional Education Leadership Award of Excellence. Dr. McCallion promotes evidence-based health practices for seniors and applies his research to develop training that helps the workforce develop critical skills for helping individuals as they age. He has contributed his expertise to a number of agencies, including Adult Protective Services, New York State Office for the Aging, Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, the Administration on Community Living, and the Alzheimer’s Association. Dr. McCallion’s contributions to the field of aging exemplify how research-informed training creates a knowledgeable and skilled professional workforce that is prepared to make a difference in the lives of seniors. **PDP**



*Eugene J. Monaco and  
Dr. Philip McCallion*