



The Exact Expertise to
Ignite and Sustain Performance™

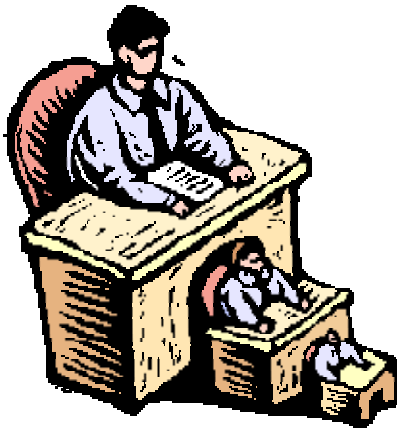
LSA Global | White Paper



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Avoiding the Four Deadly Sins of Development

Mistake #1: Executives who delegate when they should instigate.
There are times when executives should "pick a fight" with the status quo.



Of course, delegation always will be a fundamental survival skill for overwhelmed executives, but there are some things that never should be handed off. Few would argue that middle managers or human resources staffers can set the corporate agenda effectively, yet this is exactly the approach taken by a majority of organizations that embark on a major training and development effort. In many cases, only the most senior executives truly can capture people's attention and create a sense of urgency that results in new ways of doing business.

When FedEx needed to initiate major changes in the way it approached customer negotiations, the senior sales executive declared: "You can't do what you did 10 years ago—even as the market leader. If you employ the old techniques, you'll be out of business." The success of the entire initiative depended on his relentless message.

Only he could cut through the chaos and clutter of corporate life. It worked. The entire sales organization took notice and moved quickly to embrace an improved way to negotiate contracts with customers. Measurable improvements in relationships, contract renewals, and revenues soon followed.

The most successful development efforts inevitably are marked by a member of the senior management team stepping forward to say, "This is not working anymore." A sales executive at Johnson Controls framed the fundamental struggle facing the company's highly experienced sales representatives this way, "We once believed that technical knowledge in itself would be sufficient to sell our services, and it was for many years. But the world has changed."

Those toiling in the ranks of an organization may raise an issue for months—even years. However, to rise above the level of everyday corporate commentary, the person ultimately responsible for setting the corporate strategy must deliver the message. Often a direct approach is the most effective. One senior sales executive at Oracle put it bluntly, "We have to change the way our entire organization interacts with our customers." In another recent initiative at Hewlett-Packard, the head of the North American service organization issued a clear mandate, "Anybody who interacts with customers should have these skills." Within a year, customer satisfaction reached an all-time high.

Instigating change requires more than a proclamation from on high. It must link a development initiative to the corporate strategy. For instance, the CEO of a multibillion-dollar electronics distributor was asked to instigate change by creating a video that would be shown to more than 1,000 employees before training.



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It featured the CEO bounding through the corporate offices, microphone in hand, talking with wide-eyed employees about their successes in using the new approach with customers. Unconventional? Yes, but by vividly demonstrating how the troops' behaviors could align with the corporate strategy, the video accomplished far more than some memo from human resources.

Executives often fail to recognize their unique role in creating the initial awareness of the need for change. One way to see if your organization is avoiding mistake number one is to tap into the corporate grapevine. When the employees furthest from the executive suite can articulate "what we're doing" and "why we're doing it" in a clear and meaningful way, then perceptions are moving in the right direction.

Mistake #2: Middle managers who are supportive, but not involved.



There is a critical difference between support and involvement. Support is passive; involvement is active. For instance, supportive managers may provide time out of the field for employee development, but they often fail to participate in the training with their teams. As a result, their shallow understanding of the new approach means they cannot coach effectively. They even may display behaviors contrary to the new ideal. "Often, training gets implemented without a plan in place to ensure results," says one executive responsible for service at Hewlett-Packard. "The challenge is ensuring that our people execute the methodology. Our managers had to understand the program and commit to coaching the process to their folks."

In the realm of sales and service performance development, a dangerous myth often enables middle managers to remain supportive, but uninvolved. Many believe that if they hire experienced, successful professionals, they will not need to engage in hands-on coaching and reinforcement. In reality, the opposite is true. "Coaching is the only way you can reinforce the skills you've trained for," says an executive at Bayer Diagnostics. "The employee is going to do what the manager expects."

If the manager expects them to use the skills and coaches them in becoming more proficient with them, then they will use the skills and use them well."

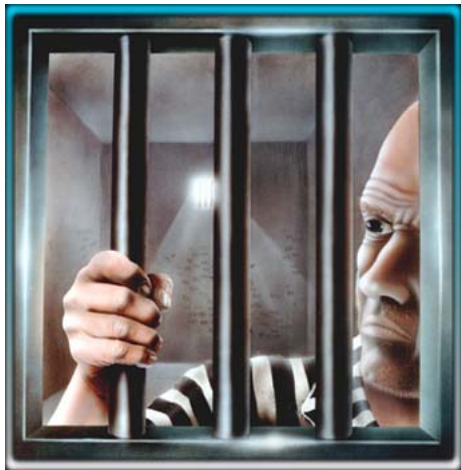
There is no substitute for managers who are involved. A good rule of thumb to determine if your organization is avoiding mistake number two is simple: Just ask. On a weekly basis, how often do activities related to coaching and reinforcing new behavior actually appear in managers' calendars?





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Mistake #3: Participants who have to go (prisoners) rather than want to go (learners).



Assume a high degree of skepticism—not enthusiasm. When the time comes to launch a new corporate initiative, it is tempting to view employee perceptions as a blank slate. They are not. Remember that every organization drags the baggage of past fads and flops into the future. With each passing change in direction or strategy, people can become jaded, or worse, suspicious of anything new.

What is more, adult learning can be a very tricky proposition. Each person must believe that learning needs to take place. In effect, we are asking proud professionals to admit they are not fully formed, optimized performers. Development even can be viewed as an outright indictment: "You are inadequate, and we are going to fix you." That is why wrestling with mistake number three will reveal the true intentions of a management team.

What can be done? Before a single sales or service professional is asked to participate in training and development, two fundamental questions must be addressed squarely. Every participant wants to know "Why am I doing this?" and "What is in this for me?" These are not trivial questions, nor are they easily answered. Often, the best answer to the question of "why" is found in recent business headlines. To kick off a major initiative at the telecommunications company SBC, executives and managers helped the teams to understand how radical changes in the telecommunications marketplace were driving the need for a new sales approach. Their security and survival depended on making a significant change. Within three months, the participants had achieved double-digit improvements in revenue, project size, and volume.

A senior executive at Verizon predisposed participants by saying, "No one in our industry has a leadership position when it comes to customer relationships. Ultimately, our effectiveness hinges on people working with people." Verizon's strategy was to handpick thought leaders in each region for the first wave of sessions that would influence the rest of the organization.

Answering the second question, "What is in this for me?" can take many forms, including a discussion of dollars in the pocket. It is helpful to remember that sales and service skill development tampers with the very source of an employee's livelihood. The tremors of a heavy-handed change in this area register at the deepest levels of the hierarchy of needs. Because sales and service skills put food on the table, individual predisposition requires sensitivity to these unspoken, but important issues.

To determine if your organization is successfully avoiding mistake number three, begin development sessions by asking participants to share openly, "Why are you here?" and "What is in this for you?" Their answers may be surprising.





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Mistake #4: The new approach is seen as optional rather than essential.



"It's not just one approach, it's the approach," says the leader of a major account strategy initiative at Sprint Canada. To drive home the point, account managers were required to present their account plans at each monthly sales meeting. According to the director of sales, "It says to my organization that I attach that much importance to it, and that the company attaches that much importance to it." As a result, nine out of ten major accounts saw marked improvements in Sprint's competitive position in just three months.

"Nothing is learned until it is applied," says adult learning specialist Bernice McCarthy. Learning and application are intertwined. That is why we cringe if employee development is positioned with a "take it or leave it" attitude. Left to their own devices, participants may give more attention to the careful application of a golf lesson than to a business development session. Organizations vulnerable to the devastating effects of mistake number four usually fail to provide real accountability for using new skills and strategies back on the job.

The fundamental principle at work is that visibility drives accountability. It is true in business and in every area of life. Consider an example from higher education. Imagine if a professor declared there would be no exams, finals, or term papers (all forms of accountability). How often would students apply themselves to their studies or even attend class? It is a silly example, but most Fortune 500 corporations we have worked with provide less accountability for the learning and application of mission-critical skills than can be found in the average freshman Algebra class.

Holding participants and managers accountable is common sense—it is not common practice. "We needed consistency," says the sales executive at Sprint. "What we did and how we did it was almost like a mystery, and success couldn't easily be duplicated. It seemed like smoke, mirrors, and magic." When daily application of the new approach is visible, everyone can learn and profit from the experience.

Accountability also is about setting expectations. Without a word, participants quickly will deduce the precise amount of personal effort required to "get by" based on how they will be held accountable for the development. This is the workplace equivalent of asking a professor engaged in a passionate digression, "Will this be on the test?" If the answer is "I don't think it will," then watch out. You can determine if your organization has escaped the effects of mistake number four by following the trail of evidence. When the management team regularly reviews data that clearly show how often and how well the new approach is being implemented by the troops, the organization is on the right track.





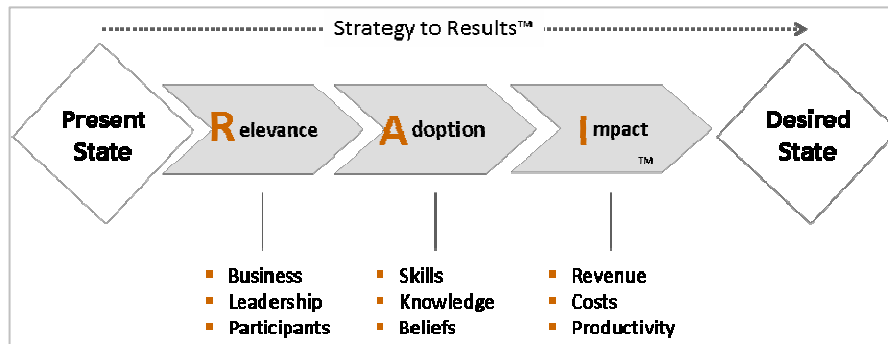
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In Conclusion

When you step back and look at the four deadly sins, one overriding theme can eliminate these mistakes, make these common problems disappear, and help bring alignment across all of your major stakeholders.

That theme is **RELEVANCE**. Relevance to the business. Relevance to leadership. Relevance to the target audience. And Relevance to their bosses.

We believe that Relevance is the first step in creating a successful learning solution. Relevance helps to drive the next two critical steps of Adoption and Impact to ensure that you get the desired results. We call this proven approach **Training RAI: Relevance.Adoption.Impact.™**



About LSA Global

Since 1995, LSA has helped organizations create and maintain competitive advantages through people. Over 85% of our business comes from repeat clients and our customer satisfaction rating is 97.5%. Our clients tell us that we are different. Our clients tell us that we save them both time and money. Our clients tell us that they appreciate access to experts across many areas

Our Leadership and Management clients report that we decrease their costs by up to 50%, while helping increase speed-to-productivity by 60% and decrease unwanted attrition by up to 40%.

Our Sales clients confirm that they have grown sales by 40%, increased units sold by 42%, increased average pricing by 12%, and closed over 50% of their pipeline.

Our Project Management clients inform us that, by regularly completing projects that meet or exceed expectations, they have become an anomaly in the world where most projects disappoint or fail.

Our clients succeed in the marketplace through increased revenue, decreased costs, and higher productivity. They maintain that our rigorous assessment, implementation, and measurement capabilities bring them tangible results. As an organization, we are fiercely devoted to supporting their success.

