

The Link between Self-Awareness, People Values, and ROI from Soft Skill Training Investments



As a C-level leader of a number of talent-driven organization that needed turnaround, I faced a huge dilemma.

Where do I spend by soft skill training dollars?

How do I measure the actual impact that investment has back-on-the-job?

Fortunately, my post-graduate education was in leadership, organizational behavior, and the psychology of the work place. I knew how to do ‘impact’ research and social program follow up research. I simply guided my HR staff as they adapted those techniques to see if training led to behavior change and increased productivity back-on-the-job.

We were looking to find connections between the ‘what and how’ of the people skill development training programs I invested in for my staff and real ROI from those investments.

We learned a few things.

1. Most of our early **people skill training investments were a waste of dollars,**

The Link between Self-Awareness, People Values, and ROI from Soft Skill Training Investments

including training in 'leadership. The people who came back from those programs could talk about leadership. They knew models of how to interact more effectively. But their inability to apply new behavior back-on-the-job meant no productivity improvements.

2. Those folks who did change their behavior were exposed to **a form of resistance by the people with whom they worked**. Those folks had to adapt to the new behaviors on the part of the trained individuals. Their 'interaction' patterns changed. Many of these 'impacted' people resisted that. We discovered the '**extinction**' effect that often suppresses the positive benefit of effective one by one 'soft skill' training.

Our solution: link the timing of soft skill training to and individual's new assignments (transfer and promotions), so that the person being trained came back from the training could implement their new skills as they built NEW build working relationships with new people.

3. Once we figured out how to get around the 'extinction effect', we started to get insights into which elements of soft skill training led to productivity increase back-on-the-job.

Here is what we learned.

- Increasing participants' **self awareness** through the use of structured feedback which told them about their behaviour patterns led to an openness to learn new people skills.
- **Role-plays and simulations customized** to our work environments were important to create the ground work needed for skill transfer back-to-the-job.
- **Soft skills were full mind body skills, not just cognitive ones**. To development them such role plays and simulations needed to be followed up with systematic practice debriefing and feedback. The most effective way to do that was to base it on the use of video recorded behavior and pre-structured rating sheets used by the other folks involved in the simulation/
- **Effective soft skill training programs were led by facilitators** who
 - 1) were skilled in the soft skills themselves,
 - 2) understood the psychology of adult skill development,and

The Link between Self-Awareness, People Values, and ROI from Soft Skill Training Investments

3) understood the need to provide the customized role plays and simulations that were FOLLOWED by systematic review of video-taped feedback and structured feedback outline above.

Finding such soft skill training facilitators was extremely hard. Most people skill training programs were delivered by people who behaved like college lecturers than this kind of skilled facilitators that this type of training really needs.



- **Interpersonal skills are layered.** When we structured the soft skill training to align with those layers, working out for the core, our payback on the job increased dramatically.

- **A capability without an aligned value DID NOT LEAD** to the MOTIVATION to actually implement behavior change back on-the-job. Often, folks came back from soft training with new

capabilities. But they did not do the work needed to use them back-on-the-job unless they had 'respect others and value people' values.

When we started to see if the people we sent on soft skill and leadership training has **such values BEFORE we invested in soft skill training** for them, our pay back from on the job productivity improvement increased significantly.

As a result, my whole approach to soft skill training changed. That is reflected in the slide deck that you can access in the url link below ...

[The Training Architecture approach to developing effective skill development programs.](#)

The Training Architecture approach has guided the development of the e-learning programs you can access by following the following link ...

The Link between Self-Awareness, People Values, and ROI from Soft Skill Training Investments

[Soft Skill and Business Leadership programs developed following these principles](#)

The Training Architecture approach also underlies the Competency Styles Self Development Workbooks, Workshops and One-on-One Coaching outlined in the following brochure ...

[Competency Styles Self-Development Workbooks, Group Workshop Webinars, and One-on-One Coaching](#)

To get more insights like this one,
[Join the Life Long Learning community](#)

Roelf Woldring
Founder and CEO
[The Right Talent](#)
[About Roelf](#)