

New World Level 2:

The Importance of Learner Confidence and Commitment

By Jim Kirkpatrick, PhD and Wendy Kayser Kirkpatrick

Brian's Story

Brian was a bright, successful sales rep for a major insurance company. He had been with his company long enough to know how it worked -- how to navigate the politics, culture and bureaucracy and achieve his goals. He was therefore excited and optimistic about his recent promotion to a unit manager position. His new responsibilities involved leading a team of 12 reps in an effort to increase sales in the Northeast U.S.

The company knew that it would not be enough to give Brian a new title, nicer office, raise and hearty well wishes. They set up a training plan designed to help him transition from the role of an individual contributor to a company leader. He was taught concepts of leadership, coaching and management. He was given materials and case studies to read to enhance his classroom experience. Brian and his classmates role-played likely scenarios that they would encounter as new leaders. They even had their role-plays videotaped so they could see how their skills improved with knowledge and practice.

Brian enjoyed his training, was engaged throughout and believed that what he was learning would be relevant to him as a new leader. Thus, Level 1 was accomplished (refer to Figure 1).

Brian also acquired the knowledge and skills required of a new leader. He displayed his competence through knowledge tests and demonstrations of his skills. He was excited about being a leader and making a positive impact on his organization. Therefore, Level 2 was also successfully accomplished.

Despite the good training, Brian had trouble performing the skills he learned in training on the job. For example, he felt a bit uncomfortable coaching direct reports who in the recent past had been his peers. He avoided coaching situations, and his unit sales suffered as a result. Levels 3 and 4 results were not on target.

Six months after Brian's promotion, he was weary, disheartened and wishing for his old job back. What happened? The reason for this disappointing scenario originated in Level 2. The missing element was Brian's confidence and commitment to perform the new leadership skills on the job.

Figure 1: The Four Levels

Level 4: Results	The degree to which targeted program outcomes occur and contribute to the organization's highest-level result
Level 3: Behavior	The degree to which participants apply what they learned during training when they are back on the job
Level 2: Learning	The degree to which participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills, attitude, confidence and commitment based on their participation in the training
Level 1: Reaction	The degree to which participants find the training favorable, engaging and relevant to their jobs

Learner Confidence

Confidence and commitment are two new dimensions that have been added in the New World Kirkpatrick Level 2.

Confidence is defined as, "I believe I can successfully apply this in my job." How many well-meaning training graduates have whispered to each other as they leave their classrooms, "He (the trainer) has no idea what I am facing back on my job!"

There are a number of reasons why what is masterfully demonstrated in training is not performed on the job. Some of the most common are:

- Lack of clarity of what is expected on the job
- A supervisor who is unsupportive at best and demoralizing at worst

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- A culture that does not hold people accountable
- Higher-level leaders who are not good role models
- Conflicting and confusing priorities
- Lack of support and resources when difficult situations are encountered

Brian and countless others like him will benefit from trainers who directly address these barriers to confident application on the job. The best place to begin to address these is in the classroom.

Here are three specific ways that trainers can increase training participant confidence to apply what they learned:

1. After knowledge and skills have been established, facilitate a discussion about what it will be like to apply the new skills on the job. If and when anticipated barriers are mentioned, work collaboratively on solutions.
2. Include a question about confidence in the course evaluation form. For example, a U.S. government agency uses the following question:

To what degree are you confident that you will be able to apply what you learned in this course on the job?

Participants are asked to mark their answers on a 10-point scale from “not at all confident” to “totally confident.”

3. If confidence questions elicit below standard scores (in this example, below 8), drill down and find out the reasons. This can be done through individual interviews, an after-class discussion or a formal focus group.
4. If an underlying pattern in answers points to problems in the job culture or environment, something needs to be done. This is entering into Level 3 territory. The trainer needs to move outside the typical trainer role of one who designs, develops and delivers training

programs and enter into the workplace to see what can be done to enhance the environment. Typically, this has to do with improving the cultures of accountability and support. Once a clear performance support network is in place, inform your participants that after-training help is available.



Learner Commitment

The new dimension in the New World Level 2 is commitment. Simply put, commitment means, “I am willing to try to apply what I learned when I get back to my job.”

A participant can be confident that they can apply what they have learned and still have little or no intention of doing so on the job. There can be a number of reasons for this, including:

- The new behavior requires more effort than continuing to do things “the way we have always done them”
- Inadequate support from the supervisor
- No consequences for not performing the newly learned behaviors
- Lack of a clear reason to apply the new knowledge

Even if training graduates are forced to perform the new behaviors, their hearts may not be in it. The end result is then cessation of the behavior when accountability doesn’t dictate it.

The U.S. government agency previously mentioned also believes that learner commitment

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is just as important to measure as confidence. They include the following question on their standard reaction sheets:

To what degree are you committed to try to apply what you have learned?

Again, they offer a 10-point scale from “not at all committed” to “totally committed.”

If surveys or direct conversations with training participants reveal low commitment scores, it is again prudent to find out the reason.

A viable shortcut to this root-cause analysis is to include a selection of drop-down answers for those who have selected a rating below 7. Here is an example:

If you rated yourself a 7 or below, please answer the following question. Check all that apply.

My commitment is not high because:

- I do not have the necessary skills
- I am not sure what is expected of me
- I have other, higher priorities
- I am not required to do so
- No one will care if I actually do or don't
- There is no incentive for me to do so
- Other (please explain): _____

Once the reasons for a lack of commitment are identified, the same methods used for enhancing confidence can be applied.

The New World Level 2

The official definition of Kirkpatrick New World Level 2, in formula form, is:

Kirkpatrick New World Level 2 =
Knowledge + Skills + Attitude + Confidence +
Commitment

This expanded definition of Level 2 will help to bring participants closer to the universal

challenge of the transfer of learning to behavior. A high degree of learning transfer is the only way to obtain significant Level 4 Results from a training initiative. Brian and all the people out there just like him deserve every advantage they can get. Help your learners achieve on-the-job success by addressing confidence and commitment, and watch their (and your) results improve.

About the Authors

Dr. Jim Kirkpatrick is the Senior Consultant for [Kirkpatrick Partners](#), a company founded by his wife, Wendy Kirkpatrick, who serves as the President.

Jim is a thought leader in training evaluation and the creator of the [New World Kirkpatrick Model](#). Using his 15 years of experience in the corporate world, including eight years as a training manager, Jim trains and consults for corporate, government, military and humanitarian organizations around the world. He is passionate about assisting learning professionals in redefining themselves as strategic business partners to become a viable force in the workplace.

Wendy is a global driving force of the use and implementation of the Kirkpatrick Model, leading companies to measurable success through training and evaluation. Her results orientation stems from over two decades of business experience in retailing, marketing and training. As a training manager, she managed the training curriculum for 1500 sales and customer service representatives across North America.

Jim and Wendy have written four books, including [Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Training Evaluation](#). They also served as the subject matter experts for the United States Office of Personnel Management's *Training Evaluation Field Guide: Demonstrating the Value of Training at Every Level*.

Read more about Kirkpatrick Partners at [kirkpatrickpartners.com](#).