

Level 3 – More Evidence to Support the Investment in Skill Development

By Mike Woodard
Georgia Pacific-CP University



The Move to Level 3 Evaluation

Measurement and evaluation is an integral component of our learning strategies and processes at Georgia-Pacific Consumer Products, which is – “Go Slow to Go Fast”. Moving to Level 3, the measurement of the change in Behavior, requires something very different from the first two levels, which is the manager’s involvement. In my opinion, when executing Level 3, the conversation at the senior level changes and takes on a very different tone: one of real accountability for change for the manager. Allow me to share with you how we are executing Level 3 within our organization.

We have an advisory board made up of cross functional senior leaders. We meet twice a year to hear what is top of mind around their business issues and needs. We also share with them what is coming next from the University, which is aligned to the requests made at the last Advisory Board meeting. (We have an Advisory Board, not a Governance Board.)

When our Advisory Board first met in the winter of 2007, I laid out our multi-year Measurement and Evaluation strategy. I shared with our leaders that we want to execute this strategy in a logical approach which meant going from Level 1 - Reaction, to Level 2 - Learning, to Level 3 – Behavior and finally where and when needed to Level 4 – Results. We had been executing Level 2 for the previous two years and I felt we were ready to move to Level 3.

Involving the Leaders

At our 2009 Spring Advisory Board meeting, I shared with the leaders that I felt that we were ready to execute Level 3 – Behavior Assessments. After I reviewed the Kirkpatrick Four Levels again, I was sure to point out that the difference between Level 2 and 3 was one small piece – their involvement as leaders in the evaluation process. I reviewed my case for moving to Level 3, and the critical role that moving to this level can make on the validation of the investment the organization is making in learning within the organization. Being leaders who recognize the importance of validating the investment we make in everything we do within Georgia-Pacific, they were on board.

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Since we have almost 70 programs within our curriculum laid out in three tracks, Core, Advanced or Mastery, I knew we did not want to try to execute this Level 3 strategy across our entire curriculum. We chose to select a few of the business critical skills within our Core track, and all of the skill development within our Advanced and Mastery Level tracks. I shared with the board members that the assessments would be sent out 60 to 90 days after our Level 2 Learning assessments had been completed and that they would have 30 days to complete the assessments. I assured the leaders that the assessment process would be easily integrated into their daily interaction with their team members. Finally, I emphasized that if they wanted to see real behavior change and business impact, we needed their involvement beyond the normal “Managers Coaching Job Aids” that we usually give them after their team members complete a program with the University.

Outlining the Leaders’ Responsibilities

In early October, I delivered a packet of the Level 3 Assessments to the Advisory Board. I asked each member to review them and please share with me their thoughts and any concerns. Each document had a cover letter explaining how the assessment tool would be executed. Several weeks went by and I had received no feedback. I started reaching out to the leaders and the common comment was – “This is it? This is all I have to do? This looks easy.” I assured them that this would be very easy for them. Since the LMS was taking care of sending out the documents and tracking when they were due, all they had to do was work with their people, which they already do, and complete a form around their observations of the application of a key business skill or piece of knowledge.

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Ensuring Success



I am not kidding myself. Moving from Level 2 to Level 3 is change, and most people don't like change. Here are some of the key "Necessities for Success" that we are putting in place to make sure that the execution of Level 3 goes as smoothly as Level 2 did.

1. A message from the president will be coming out in early January 2010 sharing his support of this increase in the measurement strategy for the University.
2. The Advisory Board members will be cascading right behind the president with their own messages of support for this move.
3. The University staff will continue to talk about this step change in measurement with our participants, like we have been doing since summer 2009.
4. For the first six months of 2010 we will be highlighting the Level 3 assessment participants and managers and their results in monthly podcasts.

Finally, I have yet to work for an organization who has unlimited resources. It is my professional opinion that unless you can prove why the investment in skill development is better than any other group, your budget will continue to shrink every year. Executing Level 3 is just good sound business judgment. You are simply making the case for why learning should get the dollars over another department.

Please contact me directly if you would like an example of the assessment tool an accompanying cover letter we used at Georgia-Pacific Consumer Products.

About the Author

Michael is the Director of Georgia-Pacific Consumer Products University in Atlanta.

For the past 23 years, Michael has spent his career in sales, sales management, and training and development, focusing in the retail and food service manufacturing industries. Michael has spent the past 11 years focusing on sales and sales leadership development in the consumer packaged goods industry.

For the past 12 years, working in adult learning has been pure joy for Michael. Michael is a Certified Professional Training Executive and has been published in both *Chief Learning Officer* magazine and the *Journal of Global Organizational Effectiveness*. He is a regular speaker at learning conferences, and also an adjunct professor with Shorter College teaching Management and Organizational Development.

Michael received a B.S.B.A. in economics and finance from Aquinas College and an M.A. with an emphasis in management from Webster University in St. Louis, MO. Michael is currently working on his Ph.D. in Leadership and Organizational Development with the University of Phoenix.

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