

SELF-EFFICACY, PERCEPTIONS OF PEER SUPPORT, AND LEARNING GOAL  
ORIENTATION: MEASURING INDIVIDUAL READINESS FOR TRAINING INITIATIVES

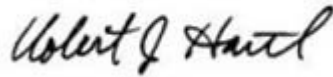
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## Abstract

The purpose of this project was to develop a scale to measure antecedent factors in potential training participants that may predict the levels of transfer of learning that these individuals exhibit after training. Specifically, the scale attempts to measure the levels of self-efficacy, positive perceptions of peer support for training, and learning goal orientation in individuals and under the assumption that they would positively correlate with transfer of learning. This study was conducted using a sample of 100 employees from a casino in the state of Minnesota. The results of the study indicate that there is a significant correlation between the factors chosen and self-reported transfer of learning.

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## **Self-efficacy, Perceptions of Peer Support, and Learning Goal: Measuring Individual Readiness for Training Initiatives**

Organizations continually find themselves investing in training initiatives in an attempt to meet evolving business needs. By offering these initiatives, the organizational stakeholders assume that employees will take the applicable information and utilize it in the work environment to improve or adapt performance of work-related behaviors. Bridging this gap between the classroom and the work environment is the goal of any training initiative. It is through this transfer of learning that an organization's return on investment (ROI) is realized. While research is limited and somewhat in disagreement regarding the average return on investment for training dollars invested, it has been estimated in some cases at over 400 percent (Morrow, Jarrett, & Rupinski, 1997). While Morrow, Jarrett, and Rupinski (1997) presented findings on one extreme of the spectrum, achieving anywhere near this level of return is obviously very attractive.

The downside of training investment lies in the frequency with which training fails to transfer into the work environment, or when it transfers temporarily only to give way to previously established behaviors. It is estimated that up to 60 percent of training initiatives fail because they do not achieve transfer of learning (Georgenson, 1982). With this consideration, and given the economic woes recently experienced by organizations around the world, it is now more important than ever to be able to offer some reliable assurances to stakeholders when significant dollars are invested, such as those invested in training.

The purpose of this project is to create and analyze a scale that may predict the level of an individual's readiness for training prior to sending the individual through training. As an analogy, if one is planning on playing golf, it is advisable to check the weather before playing. If

no effort is made to check the forecast, it may be sunny and bright, or an ill-prepared golfer may find himself in a dangerous lightning storm; training is no different. Without predictive measurement, organizational leadership may find itself taken by surprise when well-intended, well-designed training proves ineffective because individual factors negatively affect the participants. Such a tool would be valuable because of its ability to forecast transfer of learning. This forecast would allow organizations to develop interventions to help low-scoring individuals prior to investing training dollars on them. This measurement will be based on three factors that have been shown to be antecedents to transfer of learning: self-efficacy, positive perceptions of peer support for training, and learning goal orientation.



## Review of Literature

### Transfer of Learning

Successful transfer of learning is demonstrated when participants take information and skills learned in a training setting and apply them to situations in the workplace (Broad & Newstrom, 1992). Transfer of learning was identified and first studied by Woodworth and Thorndike (1901), and has since received a great deal of attention by other researchers to determine its antecedents and value. There have been many models proposed that attempt to define the internal and external processes and factors that lead to learning transfer, which has created an evolving picture in the field of research.

Some researchers like Goss (1953) looked at transfer of learning from the standpoint of pre-training activities and their impact on transfer. He found that there was a connection between transfer of learning and certain warm-up activities (such as displaying training-related visual cues) and the quality of transfer that occurred. Brand and Opwis (2007) found that there was a correlation between participant moods and the quality of transfer that occurs. They determined that the more positive the state of a person's mood, the more open to learning he or she will be and the more likely skills will transfer into real situations.

More recently, McDaniel, Dimperio, Griego, and Busemeyer (2009) examined transfer of learning from the perspective of stimulus-response models such as the Population of Linear Experts model (POLE) and the Extrapolation Associative Model (EXAM) (DeLosh, Busemeyer, & McDaniel, 1997; Kalish, Lewandowsky, & Kruschke, 2004). Through examination of research results such as these, one will conclude that no singular factor leads to transfer of learning. Rather, transfer of learning can be seen as the result of a system that includes both

internal and external factors, events, and experiences that occur prior to, during, and after training.

### **Near and Far Transfer of Learning**

Transfer of learning has been categorized into two types: near and far transfer. Near transfer occurs in situations where the training environment and situations presented in training closely mirror those situations that are encountered by participants in the real world (Barnett & Ceci, 2002). An example of this type of training-near transfer relationship is the training commonly provided to Blackjack dealers in the gaming industry. The training consists of hours of instruction and practice using cards, tables, chips, standard dealing methods, and other participants as customers. This training is meant to simulate, as closely as possible, the environment in which the new dealers will be working. This training allows them to prepare mentally and physically for their positions while successfully performing the dealing process prior to working with real customers. Far transfer requires participants to generalize concepts from training into real-world situations that are unlike those experienced in the training room, or requires participants to apply information and skills to new situations unlike those for which the training is intended (Barnett & Ceci, 2002). An example of this type of transfer of learning is the use of customer service skills learned in training with coworkers to improve working relationships. Often, in customer service training all of the information and activity in the training is geared towards serving customers, resolving customer issues, and building customer relations. However, a training participant exhibiting far transfer may be able to generalize the techniques for use with coworkers and experience success in building stronger working relationships, while never having practiced this application in the training environment. This research project's definition of transfer of learning will not differentiate near and far transfer.

Instead, a general definition is used where transfer of learning is considered to be the application of knowledge or skills acquired in training that positively impacts work performance.

### **Self-efficacy**

One of the enduring factors that researchers have tried to link to training effectiveness is self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as, “. . . the perceptions one has of personal ability to create desired results within one’s environment.” This perception has been born of experiential factors in an individual’s environment. For example, Bandura, Adams, and Beyer (1977) found that both a history of successes and vicarious experiences help to moderate the levels of self-efficacy in individuals. They showed that those with a strong history of success in their endeavors tended to have higher levels of self-efficacy. To a lesser extent, they also showed that individuals who observe the successful endeavors of others also tended to report higher levels of self-efficacy. High levels of self-efficacy have been shown to mediate success in behavioral changes and goal setting. In addition, Chiaburu and Lindsay (2008) found that levels of self-efficacy were an antecedent to a willingness to learn. Likewise, Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, and Cannon-Bowers (1991) found that high levels of self-efficacy were related to the pre-training motivation experienced by training participants.

Successful transfer of learning involves effective goal setting, motivation to learn, and requires participants to change behaviors according to the training objectives (Chiaburu & Marinova, 2005; Dweck, 1986). These factors are descriptive of individuals with high self-efficacy. For these reasons, self-efficacy was chosen as one of the measured antecedents of transfer of learning for this project.

## Perceptions of Peer Support

Edgar Schein (2004) identified three layers of organizational culture that develop over time. The first level he defined as artifacts which are observable behavioral and environmental manifestations reflective of deeper levels of the culture. The second level he defined was the level of espoused values. These are deeper-seated elements of organization culture that are explicitly expressed within the organization. At the deepest level, lie basic assumptions which are norms that members take for granted within the organization. When new employees enter the organization, they are immediately assailed by all these levels of the culture. They observe the artifacts around them, although the artifacts are initially difficult to properly understand. These new employees are subject to the espoused values of the organization, and people around them interact according to the basic assumptions held by the organization. In this way, all three levels of culture influence and reinforce one another.

Social psychologists have conducted extensive research into the impacts that immersion in organizational culture has on individuals. For example, Fischer and Huddart (2008) conducted research on individuals in the financial field and found that employees were more likely to choose undesirable behaviors and attitudes if those around them were understood to be making similar choices. The authors determined that the actions and attitudes of others served to mediate the extent to which an individual would engage in undesirable behaviors. In other words, when many others were choosing poor behavior, the personal cost to the individual for choosing a similarly bad behavior was perceived to be reduced while rewards remained high. Johnson (1989) found a similar result. His research showed that most individuals were likely to conform, but would conform more or less depending on two factors. The first factor was whether the individual had a low or high concern for appropriateness. This was measured using the Concern

for Appropriateness Scale (CFA) (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). Results showed that people were more likely to conform when they self-reported a high concern for appropriateness. The other factor was whether individuals assigned a high or low importance to personal values versus the act of conforming to cultural norms. If a high worth was assigned to personal values that were contrary to conformity, then people would conform less to the norms. Research such as this demonstrates how enculturation occurs. The effect is facilitated by environmental factors and the influence of those already in the organization (Noe & Wilk, 1993; Rogers & Spitzmueller, 2009).

Different approaches in research have been used to determine how individuals are affected by others within an organization and who provides the pressure that causes individuals to conform to cultural norms. Researchers first sought to determine the extent to which supervisors influenced the attitudes and actions of their subordinates, but the results were surprising. For example, when studying supervisor influence on training, Velada, Caetano, Michel, Lyons, and Kavanagh (2007) found a surprisingly weak correlation between the influence exerted by supervisors and the outcomes of transfer of learning. This was also found in the research of Chiaburu & Marinova (2005). Instead, peers were found to have a more significant influence on the transfer of learning than the supervisors in both of these cases.

### **Learning Goal Orientation**

Researchers have long studied the factors that lead to motivation and related behaviors. Within the last few decades, one of the areas of motivation research that has received attention is the effects of patterns of goal orientation on individual performance. Goal orientation is defined as the adaptive or maladaptive cognitive patterns, developed over time, that affect the developmental and performance behaviors in cognitive and other tasks (Dweck, 1986). Through

their research with children, Elliot & Dweck (1988) examined these patterns and effects and identified two main patterns of goal orientation that seemed to dictate performance in cognitive tasks. They named these patterns performance goal orientation and learning goal orientation.

Performance goal orientation is characterized by two factors. First, individuals that develop this pattern tend to set goals based on their perceived ability and the social rewards or sanctions they will receive for success or failure respectively. This pattern is especially prevalent in collectivist environments (Dweck, 1986; Rogers & Spitzmueller, 2009; Vandewalle, Ganesan, Challagalla, & Brown, 2000). Second, these individuals tend to avoid challenging goals or goals that require additions to their current knowledge and skill sets. Consequently, these individuals tend to set goals that will lead to socially positive reflection on themselves (Dweck & Legget, 1988; Vandewalle, Cron, & Slocum Jr., 2001). These goals are often relatively to obtain, present little challenge, and present little opportunity for growth beyond present skill sets.

The learning goal orientation pattern is characterized by seeking to master the skills and knowledge associated with the achievement of goals (Dweck, 1986). By doing so, individuals with this orientation demonstrate behaviors that are more adaptive than those with a performance goal orientation. When learning goal orientation patterns develop, individuals tend to set goals that are more difficult to achieve and present greater challenge than those with a performance goal orientation (Fan, Meng, Billings, Litchfield, & Kaplan, 2008). A learning goal orientation has also been shown to increase the amount of time spent on goal achievement and enhance goal commitment in individuals (Seijts, Latham, Tasa, & Latham, 2004). Individuals with this orientation have also been shown to exhibit increased productivity, increased creativity, and more effective performance in metacognitive activities (Ford, Smith, Weissbein, & Gully, 1998;

Hirst, Kippenburg, & Zhou, 2009; Seijts, Latham, Tasa, & Latham, 2004). In addition, those with learning goal orientation tend to have a greater ability to remain committed to a goal in the face of failure (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliot & Dweck, 1988). In part, this has been shown to be linked to more positive attitudes demonstrated by those who possess learning goal orientations resulting in what Noe (1986) referred to as trainability. In particular, attitudes related to the motivation to learn were significantly correlated with transfer of learning (Noe & Wilk, 1993).

Due to the factors shown to be prevalent in those with learning goal orientation, It is evident that these individuals may experience better attitudes toward training, greater motivation to learn, and overall higher levels of transfer of learning than those with performance goal orientation patterns (Deirdorf, Surface, & Brown, 2010; Gegenfurtner, Festner, & Gruber, 2009). Also, it has been shown that goal orientations developed over time and are relatively stable without intervention (Dweck, 1988; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliot & Dweck, 1988). For this reason, measuring for adaptive and maladaptive patterns prior to sending an individual through training may be a means to predict levels of transfer of learning from participants. Therefore, learning goal orientation is one of the factors measured for this project.

## Methods

### Measurement

The purpose of this project was to develop a new scale that is predictive of readiness for training using antecedent factors in individuals that indicate a likelihood that transfer of learning will occur. In keeping with this goal, a self-reported scale was created that is intended to measure independent the variables of self-efficacy, positive perceptions of peer support for training, and learning goal orientation as they relate to the level of transfer of learning respondents experienced with the last significant training they attended (see Appendix for the Training Readiness Scale). The scale was designed to use a five-point Likert scale as indicated below:

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree

To measure levels of self-efficacy, ten scale items were created based on themes identified in the review of literature for this project. These scale items attempted to measure self-efficacy based on the respondents self-reported perception that they were able to affect meaningful change in their work environment. These items included statements such as:

- I am able affect change in my own job performance.
- I have the ability to do what I need to do.
- I am in charge of how I perform my job.
- My job is flexible enough to allow me to implement techniques introduced in training.



To measure positive perceptions of peer support for training, ten scale items were created based on themes identified in the review of literature for this project. These scale items attempted to measure peer support perceptions based on environmental indicators perceived to exist in the work environment such as observed behaviors, attitudes, and verbal indicators. These items included statements such as:

- People in this organization are happy when training is offered.
- My peers believe that training is easily implemented in the workplace.
- I see others utilizing information taught in training courses.
- My peers feel that training is important.

To measure learning goal orientation, ten scale items were created based on themes identified in the review of literature for this project. These scale items attempted to measure learning goal orientation based on self-reported tendencies when respondents have been faced with learning situations beyond their current skill set and base of knowledge. These items included statements such as:

- I set out to master whatever I learn.
- My own goals are more important than the expectations others have for me.
- I have a clear vision of what I want to accomplish when learning.
- I want to learn everything I can about a topic to know all of its facets.

To measure transfer of learning respondents experienced relating to the last significant training they attended, ten scale items were created based on themes identified in the review of literature for this project. These scale items attempted to measure transfer of learning based on self-reported success in implementing training knowledge and skills in the work environment related to the last significant training they attended. These items included statements such as:

- I was able to implement aspects from the training into my job.
- I was able to relate situations in the training to situations on the job.
- I was able to recognize opportunities to use training in my work.
- I find that I still use the training on a regular basis.

In addition to the scale items related to self-efficacy, perceptions of peer support, goal orientation, and transfer of learning, respondents provided basic demographic data. This data included gender, age, and the level of the respondents' current positions. Current position level was indicated by choosing from three levels provided in the scale. These levels were labeled: frontline, middle management, and executive management.

### **Sample**

The sample for this research consisted of 100 employees of a casino in the state of Minnesota which employs approximately 1,800. Respondents were all the employees who attended regularly-offered, internal training classes during a two month period. The members of the sample held a wide range of positions including customer service, accounting, hotel, food and beverage, and facilities positions. The levels of the positions held by respondents ranged widely to include frontline positions (defined as anyone with no supervisory responsibilities), middle management (defined as all employees with supervisory responsibilities up to and including those with the title of Manager), and executive management (those employees with a title of Director, Vice President, or General Manager). The sample consisted of 62 females and 38 males. The ages of respondents ranged from 17 to 66, with a mean age of 39. 74 of the respondents held frontline positions, 24 held middle management positions, and one held an executive management position.

### Administration of the Scale

The scale was administered to respondents in the following manner:

- Respondents were approached by the author of the scale during regularly scheduled training classes offered by the internal training department of the organization.
- Respondents were told the purpose of the scale and were informed that participation through filling out the scale was not required and should be viewed as strictly voluntary.
- Respondents were reassured that individual responses would be held strictly confidential and kept in a secure location.
- The scale was explained to respondents as having two parts: the first part consisted of 30 statements which respondents were asked to rate using the Likert scale provided, and for the second part, respondents were told to think of the last significant training they attended, and with that in mind, rate the 10 statements in part two according to the Likert scale provided.
- Respondents were then left alone to fill out the scale if they desired to participate.

After the first two data collections, the following instructions were also given to respondents:

- Respondents were asked to provide standard answers by choosing and circling one number on the Likert scale that best fit their situation. This was done because there were several cases where participants, presumably to indicate they fell between the two ratings, circled two numbers for a single item. This rendered their scale unusable for statistical analysis.
- Respondents were asked to provide standard answers to the demographic questions in part two of the scale and reassured that individual responses could not be tracked

back to a particular respondent. This was deemed necessary after several respondents replied to demographic information in non-standard manners. For example, one respondent wrote, “thirty-ish,” as a response to the age question. These non-standard answers rendered the scale responses of these respondents unusable for the statistical analysis.

- Respondents were asked to double check to ensure that, should they choose to fill out the scale, that all items were given a rating. This was deemed necessary after several respondents skipped one or more items on the scale rendering their responses unusable in the statistical analysis.

By the end of data collection, approximately 16 scales were filled out incompletely or contained non-standard answers and were determined to be unusable for statistical analysis. These responses have been retained in a secure location, are not included in the results of this project, and are not considered part of the sample of 100 respondents.

### **Scale Data Analysis**

To test reliability, the scale was broken down into its scale components that measured self-efficacy, positive perceptions of peer support, learning goal orientation, and transfer of learning. Cronbach’s alpha was calculated for each of the four scale components. An analysis of scale stability was calculated by eliminating one scale component item at a time and recalculating Cronbach’s Alpha to determine if there was a significant change that would indicate scale component items that could be omitted.

To determine the correlations present in the data collected, several comparisons were made. First, the self-efficacy, positive perceptions of peer support, and learning goal orientation scale components were compared individually to the data gathered for transfer of learning.

Second, the combined scores of the self-efficacy, positive perceptions peer support, and learning goal orientation scale components, the results of which will be referred to as the Training Readiness Index (TRI), were compared to the transfer of learning data. Last, each scale component item in the self-efficacy, positive perceptions of peer support, and learning goal orientation scale components were compared individually to the transfer of learning data to determine the top three scale component items in each scale component with the strongest correlations to transfer of learning. Correlations were calculated with SPSS software using a one-tailed test at the 0.01 level.

## Results

### Reliability

When Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for each of the four scale components the results showed that each scale component had good internal reliability (see Table 1). The Alpha for the self-efficacy scale component proved to be the lowest with  $\alpha=0.782$ , but was still within the acceptable range for internal reliability. The strongest internal reliability was calculated for the transfer of learning scale component with  $\alpha=0.909$ . For the perceptions of peer support scale component,  $\alpha=.834$ , and for the learning goal orientation scale component  $\alpha=0.856$ . These Alphas suggest that each scale component has good internal reliability.

When scale component items were deleted, there was very little positive change in the Alpha figures. For the self-efficacy scale component, the deletion of scale item number one, "My job is flexible enough to allow me to implement techniques introduced in training," resulted in an improvement in  $\alpha$  of .002, but this was not enough to consider the elimination of the item. For the perceptions of peer support, learning goal orientation, and transfer of learning scale components, there were no scale items that could be deleted to improve  $\alpha$ . These calculations demonstrate that each scale component has good stability.

Table 1

*Scale component Cronbach's Alpha calculations.*

Scale Component:	Self-efficacy	Perceptions of Peer Support	Learning Goal Orientation	Transfer of Learning
<b>Cronbach's Alpha (<math>\alpha</math>)=</b>	0.782	0.834	0.856	0.909

### **Scale Component Correlations**

When the scale components of self-efficacy, peer support, and learning goal orientation were compared with transfer of learning the results for each showed statistically significant correlations at the 0.01 level (see Table 2). The scale component with the strongest correlation to transfer of learning was learning goal orientation at 0.605. This was followed by the perception of peer support at 0.544. The scale component with the weakest correlation to transfer of learning at 0.538 was self-efficacy. The combination of all three scale components into the Training Readiness Index was correlated stronger to transfer of learning than any of the individual scale components at 0.642.

### **Scale Component Item Correlations**

In addition to calculating the scale component correlations to transfer of learning, each individual scale component item was compared to transfer of learning, and the top three items in each scale component in terms of correlation strength were identified. For the learning goal orientation scale component, the item with the strongest correlation to transfer of learning was item number 30, "I tend to use things learned in training long after the training concludes." This accounted for 37.33 percent of variability. The second strongest correlation was with item number 9, "I have a clear goal of what I want to accomplish when learning." This accounted for 32.26 percent of variability. The third strongest correlation in the learning goal orientation scale component when compared to transfer of learning was item number 27, "I am motivated from within to learn." This item accounted for 31.47 percent of variability. For the peer support scale component, the highest correlation to transfer of learning was with item number 26, "It is believed that training makes jobs easier." This accounted for 45.29 percent of variability. The

second highest was with item number 11, “It is accepted that training in the organization adds value.”

Table 2

*Scale Component Correlations*

	<b>Self- efficacy</b>	<b>Perceptions of peer support</b>	<b>Learning Goal Orientation</b>	<b>Training Readiness Index</b>	<b>Transfer of learning</b>
Self-efficacy	1	.611**	.690**	.859**	.583**
Perceptions of peer support	.611**	1	.651**	.879**	.544**
Learning Goal Orientation	.690**	.651**	1	.887**	.605**
Training Readiness Index	.859**	.879**	.887**	1	.642**
Transfer of learning	.538**	.544**	.605**	.642**	1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

N=100

This accounted for 22.28 percent of variability. The third highest correlation was with item number 14, “People in this organization value training.” accounting for 14.82 percent of variability. For the self-efficacy scale component, the highest correlation with transfer of learning was with item number 16, “My efforts to change my own behavior are effective.” This accounted for 34.57 percent of variability. The second highest correlation was with item number 10, “I am able to affect change in my own job performance.” This accounted for 18.75 percent of variability. The third highest correlation was with item number 25, “I learn new things easily.” accounting for 12.82 percent of variability.



## Discussion

### **The Impact and Utility of Individuals with High TRI Scores**

While each of the three scale components were significantly correlated with transfer of learning by themselves, the correlation calculations showed that combining the scale components into the Training Readiness Index (TRI) had a stronger correlation to transfer of learning than any of the scale components individually. The data also indicates that those who score high on the TRI tend to self-report a greater ability to transfer learning into the workplace. This is consistent with current research. It is to be expected that individuals with high self-efficacy and positive perceptions of peer support for learning behaviors in the environment would be more likely to transfer learning into the work environment (Chiaburu & Marinova, 2005; Dweck, 1986; Fischer & Huddart, 2008). Likewise, those that score high in learning goal orientation are more likely to set more challenging goals, stick with them longer, and focus on mastery which is also conducive to transfer of learning (Fan, Meng, Billings, Litchfield, & Kaplan, 2008; Seijts, Latham, Tasa, & Latham, 2004). Conversely, low TRI scores indicate respondents possess low levels of self-efficacy, less positive perceptions of peer support for training, and goal orientations that do not focus on learning and mastery. Therefore, a low TRI score may indicate that it is less likely that an individual will transfer learning into the work environment. As all three factors that make up the TRI are based on accumulated experience, accumulated observations, experience with cultural factors, and developed patterns of behavior they have the tendency to be relatively stable over time (Bandura, Adams, & Beyer, 1977; Dweck, 1986; Fischer & Huddart, 2008).

These results have important implications for those who seek high return on investment for their training dollars. For example, if the Training Readiness Scale was administered to all

employees within an organization, it may help the employer identify those individuals who have the greatest propensity to master and utilize training material within the population. This would hold a strategic advantage if these individuals were used in training pilot groups for two reasons. First, the individuals with higher TRI scores will presumably be more open to new, challenging situations and resistant to failure and, therefore, more likely to succeed in transferring learning into the work environment. This successful transfer would then maximize the return on training investment for the organization. Second, with a greater chance for successful transfer of learning, comes a greater opportunity for others in the population to witness the success of those with high TRI scores. According to Bandura, Adams, & Beyer (1977), self-efficacy is, in part, developed vicariously through observation of the success of others. Given this, higher levels of success present in the environment could lead to more opportunities to observe individuals experiencing success, and could, therefore, contribute to overall higher levels of self-efficacy in members of an employee population. Given the right conditions, this could create a generative system within the organization raising the overall self-efficacy of the population and, thereby, increasing transfer of learning and return on investment of training dollars.

Similarly, utilizing individuals with high TRI scores to help ensure initial success for a training program may positively impact the overall perceptions of peer support for training in the organization. By utilizing these individuals to engineer successful examples of training effectiveness, it would be possible to increase the number of positive stories that are told by significant members of the organization's culture about training. As indicated by research, such as that conducted by Velada, Caetano, Michel, Lyons, & Kavanagh (2007) and Chiaburu & Marinova (2005), peer support expressed for training can positively affect levels of transfer of learning over time, especially if support is strong and appropriateness is given a high value. By

improving the quality of the learning environment through increased levels of peer support, a counter-force may be applied to those with negative perceptions of training eventually affecting a shift in overall perceptions and increasing the levels of transfer of learning within the population and return on invest for training dollars spent.

In addition to creating a pool of individuals that can exert positive forces on the environment and employee population, individuals with high TRI scores may prove to have great utility in other specific situations. For example, they may be more successful in tasks that require taskforce formation. With a high tolerance for ambiguity, setbacks, and a tendency to try to learn all they can about the tasks they take on, these individuals could prove very effective taskforce members. In situations that require peer coaching or training, these individuals may also prove to be effective. Their overall positive perceptions of training, coupled with high self-efficacy and learning goal orientation, would tend to create a positive learning experience for individuals being trained and a greater chance that trainees would demonstrate transfer of learning.

Finally, TRI scores may play a useful part in succession planning. While they should not be considered predictive of leadership success, they may provide useful revelations regarding candidates. One of these may be the individual's approach to learning a new job. Those who indicate a readiness for training through high TRI scores could be expected to be more intrinsically motivated to learn all the aspects of a new position than someone with a lower TRI. High TRI scores also indicate positive perceptions of organizational training which may affect more positive perceptions of training in their peers and, to a lesser extent, those whom they lead (Velada, Caetano, Michel, Lyons, & Kavanagh, 2007).

### **Intervention to Enhance Learning Goal Orientation**

The results of this study may also suggest possible strategies for interventions to positively impact transfer of learning in organizations that have a population with low TRI scores. For the purpose of this project, the top three scale component items for each scale component will be used to formulate these interventions.

For the scale component measuring learning goal orientation, the scale component items that accounted for the most variability were:

- “I tend to use things learned in training long after the training concludes.”
- “I have a clear goal of what I want to accomplish when learning.”
- “I am motivated from within to learn.”

These items would suggest that, in order to foster higher levels of transfer of learning, an organization should create an environment that is engineered to present opportunities to use the skills and information taught in training on a regular basis, help employees self-set specific, short-term and long-term goals for transfer of learning that focus on mastery, and eliminate factors that diminish intrinsic motivation. For example, to engineer opportunities for success and to minimize forces that may prevent transfer of learning, it would be important to set pre-training meetings with the entire chain of command within the organization to set the stage. In order to ensure the stage is set properly, each level of the chain could be engaged in planning specifically how opportunities to transfer learning will be created, when they will be created, what it will look like when the opportunities are captured by employees. It would also be important to determine how, when, and to whom success or failure of their plans will be reported. In addition to this planning and successful implementation of the plans created, rewards and consequences should be identified to provide incentive and accountability at all levels of the organization to ensure training success. This would set up an interlocking system of goal setting, support, and

accountability that would be conducive to motivation and transfer of learning. In concert with these planning, implementation, and reward activities, it may also be necessary to create disconfirmation in individuals who do not support the training initiative. This may be done using a top-down method that clarifies the leadership's commitment to the training initiative and to those members of the organization who support it. Conversely, it should also be made clear to all levels of the organization that those members of the organization who do not support training are not in sync with organizational values and behavior that is conflict with the facilitation of transfer of learning is not acceptable. By supporting these processes over the long term at individual and organizational levels, habits of effective goal setting could be fostered and reinforced leading to learning goal orientations over time.

### **Intervention to Enhance Perceptions of Peer Support**

For the scale component dealing with perceptions of peer support, the three scale component items that accounted for the most variability were:

- It is believed that training makes jobs easier.
- It is accepted that training in the organization adds value.
- People in this organization value training.

All of these items deal with fundamentally the same thing. When employees see real value in training that can be applied to make their jobs easier, and they communicate this perceived value to one another, there is a greater chance that they will transfer learning into the workplace. Two ways that this type of perception could be fostered and nurtured in an organization is through a thorough understanding of the things that are important to the employees and the ability to position and market the training in these terms, using significant others in the work environment. The first step in this process would be to take an inventory of things that are important to the employees. It may not be safe to assume that the management stakeholders always know the

things that are valued by their employees, as different roles and assumptions can cause priorities to be different. For example, it is reasonable to assume that a restaurant manager who is paid more than her employees and whose bonus is dependent on P&L figures may naturally place focus on the financial matters such as portion control and eliminating waste. A server making minimum wage can help ensure better tips if he gives his customers a little extra here and there. In this example, a manager touting the value of training based on reduced costs may have a difficult time motivating the server.

Instead, the manager must learn to think like the employee. The best way to do this is to ask the employees what they think and provide an atmosphere that is as safe as possible to communicate their priorities. This information gathering could be done by focus group or anonymous survey. Information could also be gathered using individuals who are members of the employee group as data gatherers. This approach may prove to be effective for two reasons. First, if the information is gathered and compiled by a peer group, a greater sense of anonymity and trust might be leveraged than if an individual with position power over the employees were to conduct the focus groups or surveys. Second, the peer group will be better able to articulate and compile information regarding its own needs better than a supervisor trying to interpret the messages offered by a group of which the supervisor is not a member.

Once this information is gathered, the stakeholders need to be willing to invest the time and resources appropriate to make transfer of learning mutually beneficial to the company and the employees. This may mean offering a bonus structure that rewards efforts to transfer learning monetarily if money is shown to be a motivator for employees. The company could offer additional time off for associates who transfer learning if work life balance is shown to be important to employees. The company might find ways to structure projects so employees own

the implementation process and are rewarded as a team if learning is effectively transferred into the work environment if the data gathered indicates that employees want more challenge, autonomy, and displays of trust from the employer.

Regardless of the priorities revealed to be important, accurate, objective, and transparent methods of performance measurement would be necessary. The organization must invest the forethought to identify precisely what transfer will look like when it occurs and how to ensure that only efforts that demonstrate transfer of learning are rewarded, and that those efforts to transfer learning are rewarded consistently. Just as important, the objectivity and transparency of the measurement and reward must be maintained in order to create perceptions of procedural and distributive justice. For the organization, this type of measurement should be important for another reason as well. Without it, an accurate return on investment cannot be calculated. If an accurate ROI cannot be calculated, an organization may be reinvesting too much or too little to ensure training success. If the organization invests too much, profits are eaten up. If it reinvests too little, money or other resources remain on the table that could be working to motivate and increase transfer of learning and thereby ROI for training dollars. In the worst case scenario, no measurement is done, rewards are not issued or issued for the wrong reason, ineffective training is offered on a continuing basis, and the organization has no idea if they are receiving an ROI on training or not.

Once these steps are in place, a generative system may result. Through its efforts, the company knows what employees value. Training is positioned and reward systems are designed to appeal to those values. Employees are made explicitly aware of the connection to their values and the success of the training initiative. Measurement is conducted transfer of learning is celebrated in a way that is important to employees. Training success and rewards, whether

intrinsic or extrinsic, lead to good stories, and those good stories start to shift the thinking of the population in favor of training. This shift is then perceived by others in the population, enhancing the positive perceptions of peer support. This leads then full circle to the relationship of these perceptions and higher levels of transfer of learning.

### **Intervention to Enhance Self-efficacy**

In the self-efficacy scale component, the top three scale component items that accounted for the most variability were:

- My efforts to change my own behavior are effective.
- I am able to affect change in my own job performance.
- I learn new things easily.

These items speak of building an environment where employees believe they are in control of their own performance and have the latitude to change their performance for the better. In order for this to exist, their efforts must prove more powerful than the environmental factors pushing them back to the previous norm as indicated by Lewin (1943) in his field theory research.

Supervisors could help create this type of situation by removing opposing factors and encouraging autonomy when possible.

To remove opposing factors, supervisors must be aware of those organizational forces that are arrayed against training success. For example, are there established norms that will make it impossible for transfer of learning to occur? Are there myths in the organizational culture that cause fear when individuals attempt to transfer learning? Are there real consequences that occur for those that attempt to use new skills such as supervisors that coach against initiative goals in favor of the status quo? All of these forces can cause individuals to feel that the environment is not flexible enough to affect transfer of learning and therefore decreases the power individuals perceive they have to affect change in their own performance in



keeping with training objectives. To eliminate these forces, they must be picked apart individually and, in some cases, loudly dispelled. For example, job responsibilities, policies, regulations, and practices should be examined well before training is held to determine if the conditions are conducive for transfer of learning. This advanced analysis would provide the opportunity to identify trouble spots logistically, procedurally, structurally, and culturally that may need to be addressed before training can be successfully implemented. Organizational leaders must familiarize themselves with the organizational mythology and the horror stories of which it often consists. For example, if there is a rumor that an individual was fired for trying something new, it is worth investigating. If it revealed that the myth is untrue, the myth should be dispelled by offering the contradicting evidence within the bounds of privacy laws and necessary confidentiality. If it is found that a supervisor did indeed sanction an individual for behavior in keeping with training objectives, swift and decisive action should be taken to rectify the situation.

The second part of creating higher levels of self-efficacy, is to reward the effort of employees that show initiative to develop their own skills and exhibit behaviors that indicate transfer of learning. This can be done by methodically reinforcing an organizational culture that rewards effort and celebrates successful development of knowledge, skills, and abilities. According to Deci, Connell, & Ryan (1989), intrinsic motivation can be developed in the by focusing on three aspects of the workplace. First, employees must believe that they have the autonomy to act and will not be sanctioned for doing so. This can be accomplished through engineering situations where the decision of how to act is placed upon the employee and rewards are given for efforts as well as success. Second, supervisors must deliver all feedback in a manner that is not judgmental, but purely informational. Finally, supervisors must express value

for the employee's point of view in situations that impact the employee. It should be noted that the research of Deci et al. (1998) found that these three factors were most strongly correlated with self-determined behavior when the environment of the organization was positive and perceived as supportive of the employees. In environments where trust was low or there were perceived threats by upper management, these effects disappeared. The more that self-determined behavior can be fostered, the greater the number of opportunities for success there will be for employees. With this success, there comes the opportunity for employees to experience it first-hand and vicariously. With greater number of these experiences and observations, comes the ability to raise individual levels of self-efficacy and, in aggregate, the overall level of self-efficacy in the population.

#### **Limitations and Future Research.**

While the results of this project were significant, there are certain limitations that must be considered and future research needed to confirm the findings. The first limitation that must be taken into account is that the sample of respondents was taken from the population of one organization. This may impact the results due to common environmental factors and enculturation, and may have the tendency to affect the results of the TRI scores of individuals and exaggerate the reliability of the scale. To eliminate this effect, it would be necessary to administer the Training Readiness Scale to random samples from multiple organizations to develop a more accurate measure of its validity and reliability. The second limitation to this study was the small sample to which the scale was administered. The scale was administered to 100 employees in the organization. This represents approximately five percent of the population. Because of this number, it cannot be assumed that the results of the study would generalize to the population. To rectify this weakness, a random sample of 30 percent or more of the population

would need to respond to the scale and be factored in with the initial respondents to scientifically say that the results could generalize. The scale itself may also prove to be somewhat of a limitation for this project. As a self-reported tool, it is subject to factors that may bias results such as the desire to appear socially acceptable, or self-perceptions that are not objectively in touch with reality.

Future research with this scale should be directed at increasing the number and diversity of scale respondents to further prove or disprove scale reliability and validity. In addition, effort could be placed in refining the scale component items included in each scale component to strengthen their correlation with their associated factors. Last, the interventions described in this paper should be empirically tested to determine if they have the power to affect the factors of the Training Readiness Scale in a positive manner as predicted.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this project was to develop a scale to measure readiness for training based on three factors as they relate to levels of transfer of learning. Self-efficacy was measured because of the tendency of the efficacious to believe they have the power to improve their own performance through self-determined effort. Positive perceptions of peer support for training were measured because they impact transfer of learning through the creation of a learning environment conducive to learning. Finally, respondents were measured for learning goal orientations because of the goal setting and other adaptive behavioral patterns exhibited by individuals with orientations that focus on mastery. Through the development and administration of the training readiness scale, correlations between these three factors and transfer of learning were found to be significant in the sample used. The implication of these findings is that the Training Readiness Scale is internally reliable and stable. Further research is

needed to determine if the results of administering the Training Readiness Scale are predictive of transfer of learning. If further research proves the scale to be predictive, it will suggest that organizations desiring higher levels of transfer of learning will need to focus targeted effort on creating an environment that is supportive of its employees and rewards them for desired behavioral patterns. Through thoughtful creation and maintenance of such an environment, and the resulting transfer of learning, a higher return on investment could be generated for each training dollar spent.

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## Appendix

### Training Readiness Scale

#### Instructions for Section One:

For each of the items below rate your response on the scale provided:

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	agree	Strongly agree

There are no right nor wrong answers for these items, so circle the rating that seems to fit your reality. Do not spend an inordinate amount of time on any one item; your first response tends to be the best.

1. My job is flexible enough to allow me to implement techniques introduced in training.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My peers feel that training is important.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I set out to master whatever I learn.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I have the ability to do what I need to do.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My peers believe that training is easily implemented in the workplace.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I want to learn everything I can about a topic to know all of its facets.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am in charge of how I perform my job.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I see others utilizing information taught in training courses.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have a clear vision of what I want to accomplish when learning.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am able affect change in my own job performance.	1	2	3	4	5
11. It is accepted that training in the organization adds value.	1	2	3	4	5
12. My own goals are more important than the expectations others have for me.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I have the ability to do what needs to be done.	1	2	3	4	5
14. People in this organization value training.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I am able to learn what I need to master most subjects I tackle.	1	2	3	4	5
16. My efforts to change my own behavior are effective.	1	2	3	4	5
17. My peers have good things to say about training in the break room.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I set clear goals for myself regarding the implementation of training information in my job.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I accomplish what I set out to accomplish.	1	2	3	4	5
20. People in this organization are happy when training is offered.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I hold myself accountable for my goals	1	2	3	4	5
22. Supervisors are receptive to my suggestions.	1	2	3	4	5
23. My peers believe that the training offered in this organization is relevant to their jobs.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I am accountable for gaining as much value from training as I can.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I learn new things easily.	1	2	3	4	5
26. It is believed that training makes jobs easier.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I am motivated from within to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I believe that my supervisor expects me to take initiative.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Mandatory training is welcomed in this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I tend to use things learned in training long after the training concludes.	1	2	3	4	5

### Instructions for Section Two:

**PLEASE NOTE: In order to respond to the items 31 through 40, think of the last significant training you received during your employment.**

For each of the items below rate your response on the scale provided:

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Strongly disagree	disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree

There are no right nor wrong answers for these items, so circle the rating that seems to fit your reality. Do not spend an inordinate amount of time on any one item; your first response tends to be the best.

31. I was able to implement aspects from the training into my job.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I was able to relate situations in the training class to situations on the job.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I was able to recognize opportunities to use training in my work.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I find that I still use the training on a regular basis.	1	2	3	4	5
35. My behavior on the job has changed consistent with what was taught in the training.	1	2	3	4	5
36. I use the training in a variety of situations.	1	2	3	4	5
37. The training provided information that helped me perform my job.	1	2	3	4	5
38. I have developed new habits after the training.	1	2	3	4	5
39. The training has proven useful.	1	2	3	4	5
40. The training was prepared me for real situations.	1	2	3	4	5
41. Circle your gender:					
<b>Male</b>		<b>Female</b>			
42. Write your age in the space provided to the right.					<b>Age:</b>
43. Circle the one that best describes your employment level:					
<b>Frontline</b>		<b>Middle Management</b>		<b>Executive Management</b>	

**To complete this scale, follow these steps:**

1. Indicate the ratings you assigned each item in the appropriate spaces provided.
2. Add up the numbers in each “Rating” column and indicate the column total in the space provided.
3. Transfer the figures for Totals A, B, and C to the spaces provided.
4. Add Totals A, B, and C and write their sum in the space provided.

Item	Rating	Item	Rating	Item	Rating	Item	Rating
1.		2.		3.		31.	
4.		5.		6.		32.	
7.		8.		9.		33.	
10.		11.		12.		34.	
13.		14.		15.		35.	
16.		17.		18.		36.	
19.		20.		21.		37.	
22.		23.		24.		38.	
25.		26.		27.		39.	
28.		29.		30.		40.	
<b>Total A:</b>		<b>Total B:</b>		<b>Total C:</b>		<b>Total D:</b>	

**Transfer Total A here:**   
**Transfer Total B here:**   
**Transfer Total C here:**   
**Sum total of A, B, and C:**