The [transfer of knowledge](#) in a training environment often focuses on the 'push' of that knowledge. For example, how can we design training in a way which is easy for participants to absorb, or is delivered in a method which they find suitable? As instructional designers, we can spend considerable time on training interactions, activities or content to hopefully boost participant engagement. Microlearning and mobile learning are just two of the latest examples in this push-based approach to training design.

There's nothing wrong with this approach either! However, every force has an equal and opposite reaction. Indeed, when the transfer of knowledge is focused on behavioural change – apply new skills, stop old habits, implement different processes – the push of knowledge alone may not be enough.

This is particularly true for adult participants. Changing behaviours as an adult may be associated with uncomfortable feelings – admitting deficiencies with existing performance, acknowledging that someone else may have a better solution, or experiencing discomfort from initial failures with new skills. As a result, as we try to push learning and knowledge onto participant, they may well be pushing back against us!

So, in addition to considering how to push learning, we should give equal thought to helping the participant 'pull' the learning. We need participants working with, not against, the transfer of knowledge at a fundamental level. As we push, the participant pulls.

In this series of articles, we examine three concepts to improve this participant-driven (pull) transfer of knowledge in any form of training.

- [Relevance](#)
- [Context](#)
- Accountability (this article)

Let's examine training accountability in the third of three articles in this series.

Training accountability keeps you on the course

Now, despite all of the issues of training relevance and training context, most participants are typically well-intentioned when it comes to training! While there will always be those participants who, for whatever reason, are unable to approach learning with the best of intentions, they are in the minority. Most learners are keen to improve themselves and make a change.

But learners are also busy. They can be easily distracted. Plus, the process of learning isn't always easy – particularly when it involves behavioural change. So we can hit a problem of 'intention versus action'. Participants may want to change, but they push the learning away if other things distract them or the learning becomes a little hard.

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Training accountability balances the push and pull of learning

That's where accountability comes in. Accountability creates a 'pull' on the learner from their manager (or another stakeholder) who can hold them accountable. This, in turn, generates a 'pull' from the learner for training. Accountability provides a counter-balance to the often instinctive push from participants who get distracted or encounter difficulties. It keeps the participant on the path.

Training accountability case study

Accountability is also the book-end to context. While context assists participants before training begins, accountability assists through to the end of the training process. Statistics on accountability are overwhelming too. In over 2,500 training modules we reviewed from 2018, we found that when a participant's manager was automatically notified of the participant's training progress, reflections, plans, hurdles and outcomes, then every training success metric jumped.

- Completion rates were 95%, compared to 68% for participants without stakeholder accountability.
- Completion within specified due dates was 92%, compared to 45%.
- Success at on-the-job implementation was 85%, compared to 53%.

Critically, these results came from merely copying the managers on all participant notifications and outcomes (including participant answers, choices, reflections). This wasn't about managers providing 1:1 coaching (which would improve results even further). This was purely from the participants knowing that their manager was updated. Knowing that they would be accountable for their actions and choices.

When you know others are watching your performance, you tend to work that little bit harder.

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