Develop a Communicating and Reporting Plan for Useful Evaluation

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Assessment/Evaluation

Stakeholders are key for useful evaluation! Develop a communicating and reporting plan to actively interact with your stakeholders throughout the evaluation process.

Many organizations spend a lot of money to provide training courses or programs to improve their performance in today's competitive environment. Therefore, evaluation plays a critical role in making judgments about the value of a course or a program and can help provide solutions for improving the performance of programs and organizations.

Why do you evaluate?

Kraiger (2002) suggests three primary reasons to evaluate training courses or programs:

1. **Decision-making.** The information gained from evaluation can provide input for making decisions about training programs, such as course retention, course revision, or personnel decisions (e.g., quality of instructor).
2. **Feedback.** Evaluation provides feedback to course designers, trainers, or the trainees themselves, which allows them to design or engage with the course more effectively.
3. **Marketing.** The data you collect through training evaluation can be useful for marketing the training programs. You can use the results of your evaluation to demonstrate the value of training to upper management or help future sponsors or trainees understand the beneficial changes initiated through training.

So how do you evaluate to be useful?

Training evaluation is critical for providing useful information to multiple stakeholders and groups. Since various stakeholders are affected by both the program being evaluated and the evaluation results, evaluation activities should be implemented on multiple levels, which differ for the various stakeholders, to correspond with the multiple goals and beneficiaries of a training program. (Eseryel, 2002).

Therefore, training evaluation requires collaboration with multiple stakeholders and needs open and ongoing communication with them to provide multiple points of view, which can be used to minimize bias and promote more accurate evaluation results.

The process below describes a method for how an evaluator can develop a communicating and reporting plan, actively interacting with his or her stakeholders throughout the evaluation process.

BEFORE THE EVALUATION

Step 1: List all of your evaluation's stakeholders

DURING THE EVALUATION

Step 2: Check the reasons for communicating with each stakeholder.

- Include in determining the evaluation's design and implementation
- Inform about specific upcoming evaluation activities
- Keep informed about progress of evaluation

AFTER THE EVALUATION

Step 3: Check the reasons for communicating with each stakeholder

- Inform about the program and the evaluation (build awareness and support)
- Convey evaluation's results for decision making and action.

Step 4: Describe the characteristics of each stakeholder or stakeholder group.

- Stakeholder Characteristics (e.g., education level, their familiarity with the program and with evaluation, their role in decision making about the program, etc.)

Step 5: Given the reasons checked in Steps 2-3, and your description in Step 4, select and note appropriate format(s) for each stakeholder.

- Format

Step 6: Discuss and note timing for this communication/report

- Timing

Step 7: Discuss and note resources needed for this communication/report.

- Resources

(Adapted from Preskill and Russ-Eft (2005). Building Evaluation Capacity, p. 325-326. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.)
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Before the evaluation, the evaluator should identify each stakeholder or group and incorporate their concerns and needs, as well as their perceptions and values, into the evaluation plan. Different stakeholders will have different information needs and values for the evaluation. If you ignore them, you might miss some vital information to make the decisions.I review the process in a little more depth:

For example, at Franklin University, when I conduct evaluations for courses that have been developed and implemented, the first thing I do is identify my stakeholders. Possible stakeholders could be: a program chair who is in charge of the program courses, a content expert who provides the information on the course, an instructor who teaches the course, students who took or will take the course, a content editor who reviews and edits the course, and other support teams, such as those in IT and the library, who help develop the course.

During the evaluation, the evaluator should communicate with his or her stakeholders effectively in order to reach continuous agreements with the stakeholders regarding the evaluation. Communication must be ongoing and should keep stakeholders informed throughout the evaluation process.

For example, I communicate with each stakeholder via face-to-face meetings, emails, phone calls, and using Intranet communication tools like Microsoft OneDrive. I like to use OneDrive because it's an easy way for multiple participants to share and edit materials. One strategy I use to keep stakeholders actively engaged is to ask focused, targeted questions to each individual, rather than sending general emails and questions to all stakeholders. This way, I can collect more detailed and accurate data from my stakeholders.

After the evaluation, the evaluator should make a plan for how to report the evaluation results to his or her stakeholders. Different reports and formats (which might include variations in content, language, time, length, etc.) should be developed to match stakeholders' needs and preferences.

For example, my stakeholders usually ask me to prepare a written report that documents my findings. In the individual reports, I include different content based on their needs and purposes. Some reports might focus on multiple levels of solutions based on the findings. Others might focus on the Return on Investment (ROI) of the findings. Some reports may

include both. Sometimes, my stakeholders also want me to prepare an oral presentation for the findings, which can take many forms based on their preferences. I might deliver a briefing at a meeting, contribute to a forum or webinar, or provide demonstrations using videos or recordings.

References

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