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**ASSESSING THE IMPACT
OF DIVERSITY
WORKSHOPS - DO THEY
MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

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Although organisations invest considerable time, effort and resources running diversity workshops, they often pay relatively little attention to assessing their effectiveness. Yet this stage is critical if diversity is going to move away from simply seen as simply a politically-correct thing to do.

In fact, evaluation of the impact of the programme is in many respects just as critical as putting a programme in place to start with. Given the monumental amount of research that has gone into establish the business case for diversity and managing diversity effectively, evaluating the impact of diversity should be relatively simple and demonstrate clear benefits.

So this document outlines some key steps to evaluating the genuine, longitudinal impact of diversity workshops in an attempt to encourage everyone involved in these programmes to be more demanding of, and confident in, what the programme can achieve.

Step 1: Move beyond the Happy Sheets

Most diversity workshop evaluations merely assess qualitative feedback from participants. However, someone's immediate reaction to the workshop does not necessarily relate to their learning or eventual job performance.

Step 2: Identify a relevant evaluation model

A multi-dimensional approach provides a more reliable measure of whether the workshops have been effective in achieving organisational aims and in identifying areas for future development. The most common model in use is the Kirkpatrick Four Levels of Learning Evaluation, and there are plenty of guides available to support this method of evaluation. Two other models to consider are:

CIROP

When defining what to assess, one of the most useful is the Community Impacts of Research Oriented Partnerships (CIROP) framework (Warr, Bird and Rackham). Evaluation is considered throughout the training process, based on:

Ultimate objective - what the organisation is trying to change.

Immediate objective - the work behaviours you want to change.

Immediate learning - what learning needs to be achieved.

TOTADO

Dr. Kamal Birdi of the Institute of Work Psychology (IWP) also suggests using the Taxonomy of Training and Development Outcomes (TOTADO), which extends earlier models like Kirkpatrick to provide an integrative, multi-level approach. This looks at four outcomes:

- Individual
- Team
- Organisational
- Societal

Step 3: Plan your evaluation

A common error is to begin looking at evaluation options once the rollout of the workshops has already started. By this point, it is often too late to do anything rigorous because many evaluation procedures require a measure of awareness / ability before the initiative and then again after the initiative has been completed.

As soon as the objectives for the programme have been identified, the programme design and evaluation should be outlined concurrently. This will enable genuinely rigorous evaluations to take place. Ideally, the evaluation should include some before and after measure, to identify genuine change in levels of awareness or skill. The evaluation should also be longitudinal where possible as this will identify any drop-off points where reminders or prompts are required. For example, at Pearn Kandoal we worked in conjunction with the Institute of Work Psychology in Sheffield to evaluate the impact of one of our blended programmes (a combined e-learning and follow-up face-to-face workshop), and found that in order to maximise the learning from the e-learn, follow-up contact needed to be made within 3 months of the programme having been taken.

Step 4: Decide what to evaluate

To evaluate if learning is being applied and whether it meets organisational needs, a range of outcomes should to be assessed.

Individual outcomes

At a cognitive level this can include knowledge of the organisation's diversity strategy and their role in achieving the strategy. This can usually be achieved through self-assessment using multi-choice questions.

Behaviour is a critical area that is often overlooked. It can cover the extent to which learning is applied back in the workplace; whether individuals act as positive role models, manage people fairly, treat them with respect and apply diversity in their own work. Since managers tend to over-estimate their ability in these areas, this is best assessed by colleagues including peers, bosses and subordinates.

Team related outcomes

These are usually assessed via a survey of the team itself. For example, a manager who has completed the training may nominate a particular individual to participate in the assessment. They might be asked about the effect on other people's attitudes, confidence, and well-being; how fairly they feel they are being treated. Organisational citizenship behaviour issues may also be included: are people satisfied in their jobs? What is their own understanding of diversity and what it means to their work and team goals?

Organisational level outcomes

These are normally tracked using broader internal surveys such as Pearn Kandola's Diversity Climate Questionnaire (DCQ). Other indicators include staff turnover, absenteeism figures, levels of stress and well-being, and recruitment and selection in different groups. Customer perceptions and service quality can also be monitored.

Societal level outcomes

Organisations with Corporate and Social Responsibility strategies that link strongly to diversity may wish to evaluate to this level. Also, public sector bodies also have an opportunity to examine whether the workshops are affecting policy development, for example. Typically diversity monitoring can be built in to broader measures of organisational performance.

Step 5: Choose your evaluation tactics

In deciding what level and type of data to collect, when and how to collect it and who from, there are three main strategies:

- Assessing outcomes at the end of the workshops - usually limited to individual outcomes.
- Assessing pre and post-workshop - provides a measure of whether objectives have been achieved and the extent of the change. A further follow up assessment three months later also helps to gauge how much knowledge has been retained and applied. Nominated individuals can be asked to assess how team members have changed.
- Comparing a group that has gone through the workshops with one that has not - provides a clear message of the difference the workshops have made.

The most effective approaches evaluate whether knowledge and behaviour have changed, rather than simply the individual's reactions to the workshop. Simply looking at reactions to the workshop can often provide a result of how much they enjoyed the time they spent in the training room, rather than what they actually learned.

Pearn Kandola is increasingly involved in carrying out these evaluations of the broader outcomes and we expect that trend to continue. The results provide valuable information to revise and shape our diversity programmes as well as proving the impact of our work to our clients.



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