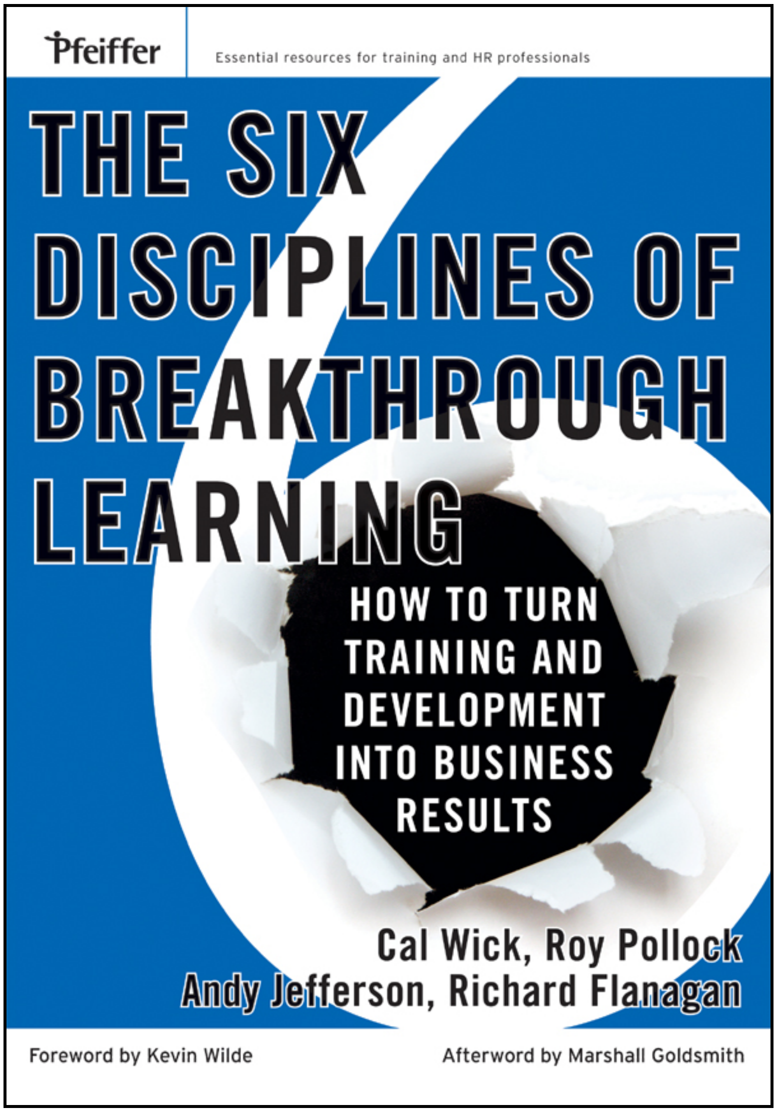
A BRIEF GUIDE TO:



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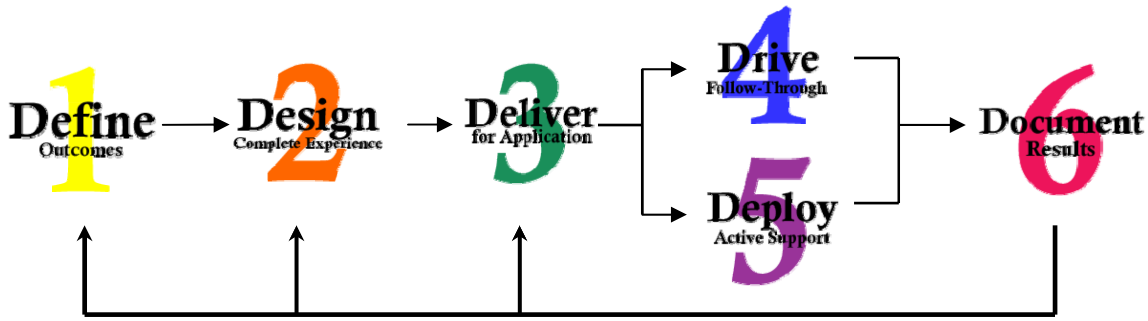
Introduction

This guide provides a brief introduction to the *Six Disciplines of Breakthrough Learning: How to Turn Training and Development into Business Results* by Wick, Pollock, Jefferson, and Flanagan (Pfeiffer, 2006 ISBN: 0787982547).

Companies that are the most efficient at turning training and development into business results practice six disciplines:



The Six Disciplines (6Ds™)

D1: Define outcomes in business terms

Organizations invest in training and development with the expectation of a return in terms of improved business results. Therefore, the first discipline is to rigorously define how the training program will contribute to the organization's mission and productivity. After successfully completing the training, what will learners *do* differently and better that will contribute to their personal and business success?

Defining outcomes *in business terms* is key to successfully practicing this discipline. Traditional learning objectives are not sufficient; they define what will be covered or learned, but not how it will be *used* to benefit the business. The latter is vital to secure management support and to establish, in advance, how success will be measured.

Defining expected workplace outcomes in business terms is a responsibility shared between business managers and the learning organization. Management should not allow programs to proceed unless the benefit to the business can be clearly articulated. Likewise, training and development professionals should not accept the responsibility for conducting a program unless the business benefits are clear to both line and learning managers.

D2: Design the complete experience

Learning and development produces performance improvement only when it is transferred and applied to the participant's work. Maximizing the effectiveness of training and development requires designing and managing all three phases of the process:

- **Phase I:** Preparation in advance of formal instruction, including the development of "learning intentionality" through discussions with supervisors.
- **Phase II:** The structured learning experience which may be virtual, instructor-led, action learning, or any combination thereof.
- **Phase III:** Transfer and application, continued practice, and learning on the job.

Traditionally, the design of training and development interventions focused almost exclusively on Phase II – the structured learning experience. The evidence is clear, however, that transferring learning to the job in a meaningful manner depends as much on external factors – such as managerial support – as it does on the training itself. In other words, a great training program is necessary, but not itself sufficient to deliver the results management wants.

The most effective programs address the *complete* experience. Their design includes meaningful Phase I pre-course preparation that is used and reinforced in Phase II, as well as a system for managing the post-instruction (Phase III) period to ensure that new skills and knowledge are put to work.

D3: Deliver for application

For training and development to pay dividends in terms of improved results, participants must be able to make the connection between what they learn during instruction and how they can apply it to their daily work.

The third discipline practiced by the most effective programs is to *deliver for application.* Material is presented in ways that emphasize application to minimize the learning-doing gap, motivate participants by illustrating the benefits, and prepare them to put their learning to work.

To achieve this goal, each topic must be firmly linked to business needs and realities. Examples and exercises need to be credible and relevant to the participants. Goal setting must be taken seriously. During the course, participants should be encouraged to stop and reflect on how they can use what they just learned to help them be more effective. They should be given adequate time and guidance to set strong goals for post-course learning transfer.

D4: Drive follow-through

Numerous studies have shown that there is a critical “window of opportunity” for practicing new skills and establishing new habits after learning something new. Yet, historically, the immediate post-instruction period has been ignored by program designers. As such, it affords the greatest opportunity for improving learning outcomes.

The fourth discipline of highly effective learning is to put in place systems and processes that drive follow-through, learning transfer, and application.

Participants’ objectives for applying what they have learned must be treated like other business objectives. They must be tracked, measured, and recognized, not put in binders and forgotten. As long as learning objectives are treated as "optional," the return on training investment will be suboptimal.

During the transfer and application phase, participants need to be reminded of their developmental obligations periodically, just as they are reminded of their business objectives. The most successful programs apply processes and systems to ensure periodic reminders to keep learning transfer top of mind. Web-based follow-through management systems such as *Friday5s®, ResultsEngine®,* and *DevelopmentEngine®* have been developed specifically to support the transfer and application of learning and development.

Participants in corporate training and development programs are adult learners in a non-academic setting. To maximize the value of the learning, they need to pause and reflect periodically on their current and prior experiences. "If there is no time for reflection,” Fred Harburg, Fidelity Financial’s Chief Learning officer wrote recently, “there is almost no chance for improvement." A system of follow-through management needs to not only remind participants of their objectives, but also provide a forum for guided reflection to help them draw out and consolidate the lessons of their experiences.

Companies that have implemented post-course follow-through management have seen dramatic results. Participants in programs with follow-through management put forth greater effort, have more discussions with their managers, and make greater progress than those in traditional programs where follow-through was left to individual initiative and chance.

In studies spanning a wide range of programs and industries, Marshall Goldsmith and colleagues have identified a consistent relationship between the degree of follow-up and the degree of improvement. Those who were seen to consistently follow-up on leadership programs were judged to have improved the most. Those who failed to follow-up were rated as unchanged or less effective.

D5: Deploy active support

Follow-through management is most effective when it is linked to on-going support that assists learners in applying new methods and mastering new skills. The fifth discipline of highly effective programs is to ensure adequate sources of support to accelerate transfer and application.

Support from direct supervisors is essential. Well-designed programs ensure that managers know and agree with their direct reports' development objectives and that they are committed to support their achievement.

Nothing undermines a training program more quickly than a manager's indifference or disparagement of new knowledge, skills, and behaviors. Senior management needs to set the tone. Managers at all levels should understand that it is imperative to endorse the training and make clear the expectation that the new learning be applied on the job.

Other important sources of support include instructors, peers, and coaches (internal or external), as well as printed or online guides to application such as *GuideMe*®.

Historically, the instructor's or facilitator's role was limited to the formal instruction period. This is unfortunate, because they are both knowledgeable and respected and, therefore, ideally suited to provide advice during the critical transfer period. To do so, however, they must have both the tools and the time to do so effectively.

D6: Document results

The investment in training and development should be treated just like any other corporate investment. That is, the results should be documented and the program's impact assessed to ensure that the investment is producing an adequate return for the stakeholders.

The results of training and development are more difficult to quantify than some other sorts of investments, but that is no excuse. Relevant outcomes need to be quantified to justify continued investment. Documenting results is also essential to drive the continuous improvement needed to stay competitive. Only by comparing the actual results to the expected results is it possible to improve subsequent cycles.

Evidence of activity (number of courses offered, number of people trained) should not be mistaken for evidence of productivity. Increasing the number of people trained is of value only if the training actually improves results. If no one uses what they learned in the training, then training even more people is a waste of resources.

Finally, learning organizations will benefit by more effectively marketing their results to their key stakeholders – management, shareholders, future participants, and fellow learning professionals.