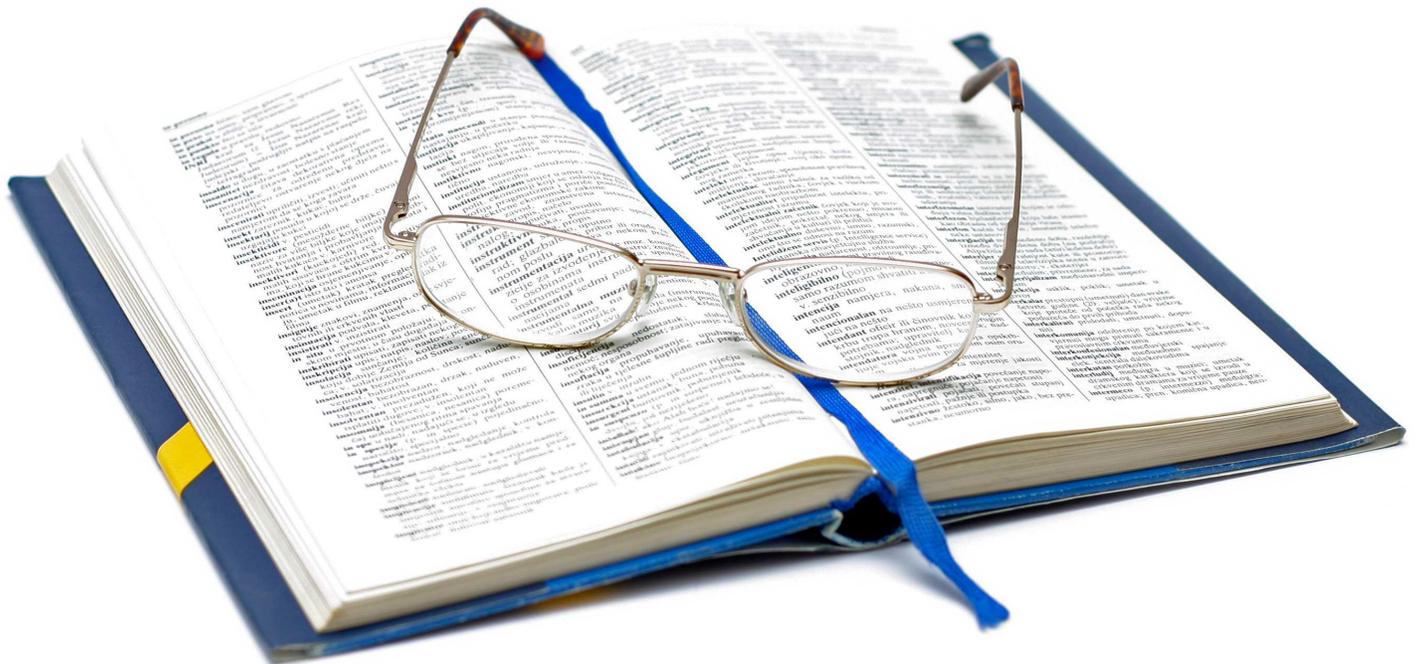


# Learning Transfer

## KNOWLEDGE IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE

Factors that improve the transfer of learning *by Silega Global Inc.*



Imagine that – you have spent more than four months organizing a big learning event related to an important strategic initiative. Several thousands of dollars budget was spent on a venue, travel costs, contracting external keynote speakers and group activities. The seminar is a total success, everyone is excited. In order to document the success of the intervention and to prove

the ROI on the budget spent, the HR manager sent a simple survey to the participants containing three simple questions 1) what did you remember, 2) what would you apply and 3) what benefits would you obtain (on personal or professional level).

The only problem was that because of holidays period that survey was delayed 3 weeks. To huge surprise for the HR manager no-

body answered the survey. When he approached some of the participants and asked them personally, the only common point they remembered and liked from that event was... the golf tournament during the last day.

Before you say “this never happens at our company” think honestly what is the percentage of knowledge and information that people retain and apply several weeks

after a corporate training intervention? According to our recent survey 52% of money invested in corporate training have no return whatsoever, or in other words half or the training money are just total waste. The question is which half?

## What factors contribute for a better creation and retention of knowledge?

*For years training was considered to be a universal cure for company problems. Staff not motivated? Do training. Team is not aligned? Do training.*

The process of building knowledge and skills is lengthy, requires constant coaching and supportive culture. But driven by a desire for quick results, this is what a usual training investment looks like (Figure 1).

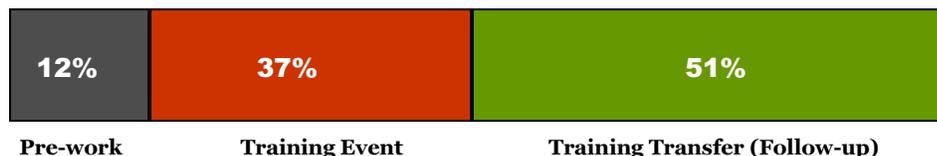
But according to our recent global study, only one third of new skills are built during the training intervention (Figure 2).

This is what usually causes a conflict between management and hr. As in the mentioned case, after the survey management was not satisfied with the results from the learning event so they concluded "The seminar failed". The Hr manager on the other hand blamed management for not providing continuity afterwards. The truth is that the training didn't fail, the transfer did.

Figure 1. Typical training investment



Figure 2. Where does the higher training ROI comes from



## What are the factors that contribute to poor training transfer?

The most common factor is lack of accountability and supportive environment. Participants are not encouraged to apply what they learned and don't have ownership over the learning process. This sometimes is reinforced by employee's manager who might see training as an obstacle to "real" job getting done.

*Here are some examples from our experience:*

**Permission to go at training not granted** – managers refuse to let employees to go to already scheduled training because of work overload. This was a case where employees had desire to learn and improve but environment limited them.

**Contradictory messages.** What is being taught in training is in

conflict with messages employees receive from managers, colleagues or organizational system.

Another example could be a company trying to reinforce teamwork on training while measuring and rewarding exclusively individual contribution.

**Lack of perception of relevancy.** Training department fails to "sell" the idea or learners do not identify themselves with the trainer.

During an outdoor activity, two out of thirty team members got injured and another employee left the company short after because she was obliged to do activities that her health condition did not allow. And the purpose of that event was to build a better team... In another example company had only an average 20% of attendance to learning events because employees would sign up and wouldn't show up.

**ACCORDING TO OUR RECENT SURVEY 52% OF MONEY INVESTED IN CORPORATE TRAINING HAVE NO RETURN WHATSOEVER.**



**Easy to apply action ideas that might increase learning transfer significantly:**

**Immediate action planning** – ask employees to immediately visualize situations where they could apply what they learned.

**Contract and commitment sheets** – elaborate a kind of learning contract to which participants commit to specific improve-

ments and share this information with the immediate manager.

**Job aids** – those low-cost reminders can significantly increase the return on your investment. Desktop cards, posters, stickers, flip cards, screen savers are just some options.

**Newsletters** – printed or electronic newsletter outlining key messages from training, success stories and practical ideas for ap-

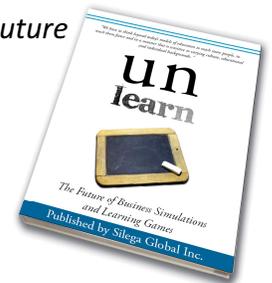
plication.

**Podcasts and Audio CDs** – if you have employees that spend long hours commuting this can be a great investment that might help them learn while on the go.

**Follow – up sessions** – Meetings conducted two to four weeks after the training with the purpose of sharing application experiences and exchange ideas.

---

Article is based on our recent book “Unlearn - The Future of Business Simulations and Learning Games”.  
**Coming Fall 2011.**



[WWW.SILEGA.COM](http://WWW.SILEGA.COM)

Silega is a global full-service training company. We help our customers improve their performance quickly by developing the competencies to be more successful. Our areas of influence include Business Simulations, Executive Workshops, Measurement Tools, Training Transfer, Coaching and Custom programs. Silega's training programs are based on the Experiential Learning System™ that provides higher retention rate and make participants learn by simulating real-world business situations.