

# **Transfer of Behavioural-Oriented Techniques in Human Resource Development**

Survey 2007/2008

## **Index**

Preface.....	3
Number of attended workshops .....	4
Demographical Informationen .....	5
Results.....	6
Initial position before participation in a seminar .....	6
Situation during the workshop .....	7
Situation after the seminar .....	7
Transfer opportunity.....	8
The support of others.....	9
The Companies' Support.....	10
Additional Evaluation .....	11
Conclusion.....	12
List of Contributors to this study.....	13
Summarised suggestions for practical application to the work life:	
Training is great – Transfer is better.....	14
What is understood under a “transfer-discussion” and what is it’s procedure? .....	14
We are a Team.....	16
We practise what we preach... ..	16
Address.....	16

## **Preface**

Times in which both money and time are scarce the importance of applying Human Resource Development topics to working life increases constantly.

The implementations of Human Resource Development provide target oriented measures and techniques to transfer knowledge the best possible way. Human Resource Management discussions have become established in organisations and are frequently used by executive managers.

The single participant of a Human Resource Development implementation inherits the role of a multiplier to pass on knowledge to other co-workers.

Are the statements above to be taken as a fact or are they just true in theory?

This question, as well as the issue of how to transfer acquired knowledge from training to everyday working life, has been addressed by a survey of the Human Resource Development Gartner-Steffen in 2008. The participants were 136 subjects in 42 organisations.

The questionnaire to collect data for the survey contains four pages with demographical questions as well as 10 item-sections concerning the following topics: Participant motivation, setting their personal goals for the seminar, satisfaction with the seminar and the practicability of the contents. Finally, the questionnaire includes items regarding the experienced support they obtained back in their daily work.

Ten items can be answered in approximately ten minutes. The intention of the questionnaire was to ascertain how participants in behaviour oriented implementations can be supported to integrate the contents of the training into their everyday working life.

Hence, the main goal was to investigate how organisations, in regard to management and trainers, can improve and actively support the sustainability of behaviour oriented implementations to optimise the value for the participant.

The majority of the subjects recruited were participants of seminars arranged by the Human Resource Development Gartner-Steffen. The data was collected anonymously. Additionally, the participants' Human Resource Department was asked for permission to record the data. Attached to this document is a list of all the companies engaged in this survey.

This paper is the result of competent team work. While Mario Bühner designed the questionnaire sheet, Margot Borstel dealt with the data input, and Norman Radtke occupied himself with the statistical evaluation of the survey. The most important work of course was done by the participants. Only with their help was it possible to obtain these significant findings.

In the name of our team we hope you enjoy reading this paper and find inspiration to transfer the knowledge and skills achieved in Human Resource Development implementations to your personal working life.

Regards  
Ingrid Gartner-Steffen

## **Methods**

The 136 participants are employees in different industries varying in size and background. Thus, not only native born Germans but also U.S. allies living in Germany took part in the survey. The questionnaire was sent to the subjects after a certain period of time after their participation in a seminar conducted by the Human Resource Development Gartner-Steffen. They were requested to answer 12 items regarding the effects and the sustainability of behavioural oriented measures.

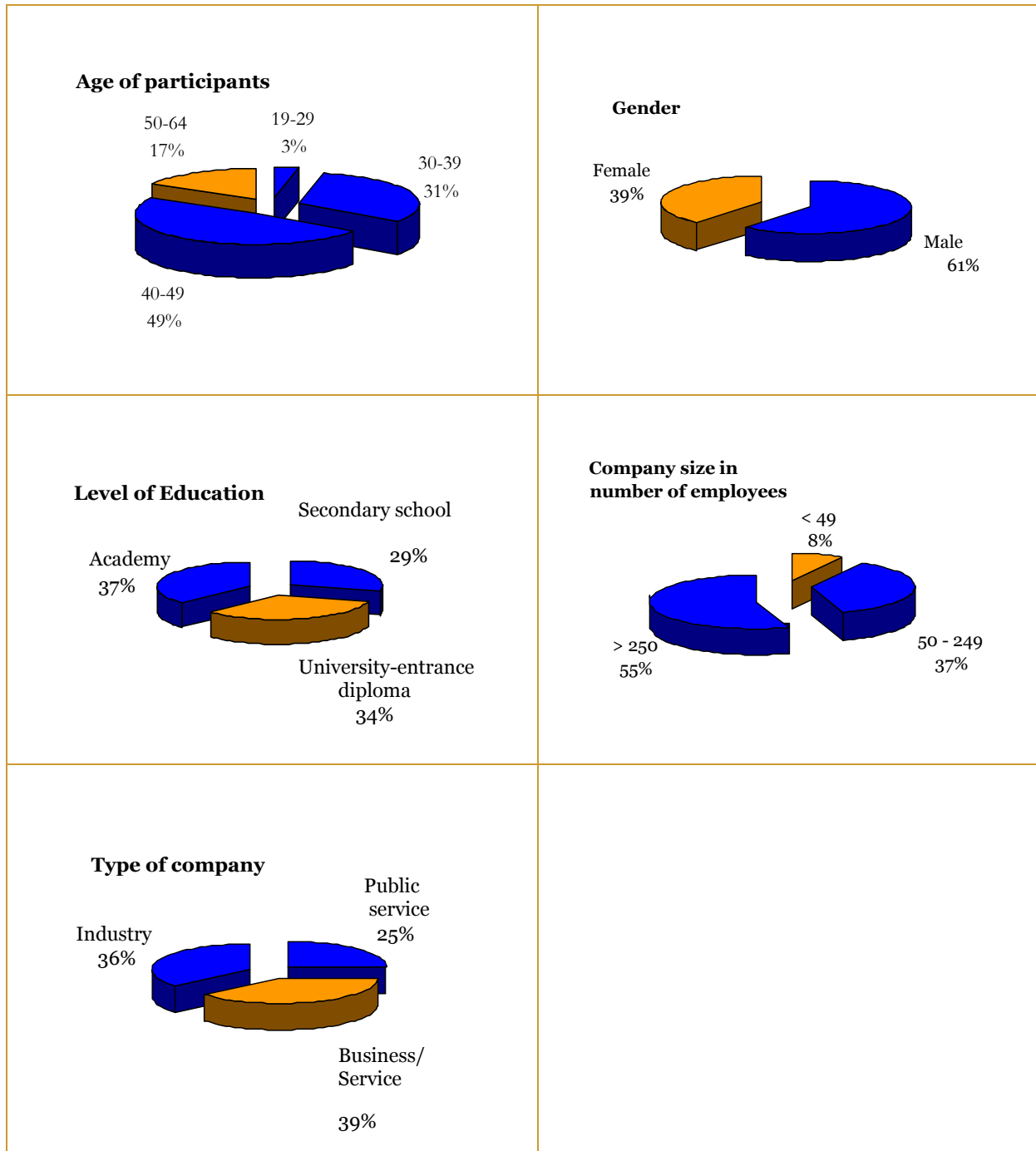
The participants chose between given answers, created an order, answered questions with “yes” or “no” or estimated a statement on a scale from “not at all” to “absolutely” as well as between “never” and “always”. Some of the questions gave space for additional comments.

The goal of the survey was to measure the effectiveness of behaviour oriented seminars, such as conflict resolution, communicative behaviour or team development. Workshops concerning subject specific knowledge were not considered in this survey.

### *Number of attended workshops*

Most participants attended four behavioural oriented seminars on average before completing the questionnaire, whereas 27 % of the subjects had attended just two seminars beforehand. Asked was the total amount of workshops visited, not for their duration of time.

*Demographical Informations*



## **Results**

### *Initial position before participation in a seminar*

The participants were asked why they decided to attend a seminar.

39.5 % - more than 1/3 of the participants – attended upon a recommendation from others. (The results, including the answer option “partly”, increased the number to 67.6 %.)

84.0 % of the participants attended because they were interested in the subject.

25.2 % were required to participate in the seminar

The participants were asked about their expectations.

87.0 % hoped to enhance their behavioural and soft skills.

75.4 % had previous experience with the topic and had great expectations for what they would be able to learn in the seminar, while

57.0 % of the participants did not give much thought to the content of the seminar.

17.3 % considered attending the seminar to be a nice opportunity to attend

1.6 % confessed that they did not believe in the effectiveness of seminars

10.8 % declared that behaviour oriented seminars are not always ineffective

89.2 % considered behaviour oriented seminars to be effective

The last figure confirms that 84 % of the participants attended the seminar because they were interested in the subject.

It is striking that 87 % of the participants were hoping to develop their own behavioural and soft skills, 75.4 % have at least had some experience with the seminar topic beforehand, but 57 % didn't have an exact idea about what they wanted to learn in the course of the seminar.

These results showed that the participants were interested and gave thought to the seminar (hope for behaviour change/ interest in the seminar) on one hand, on the other hand they did not know which skills to improve and how to improve them (no specific ideas about the content of the seminar).

*Situation during the workshop*

The answers to the question: "What was most important for you in regards to this seminar?" result in the following order:

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| 1. Finding solutions for work-related problems | 42.6 % |
| 2. Personal development                        | 35.7 % |
| 3. New experiences                             | 14.7 % |
| 4. Exchanging experience with colleagues       | 14.0 % |

The order of answers with less significance:

1. Joint learning in a group
2. Theoretical insights
3. Getting away from work

The results show that the participants hoped to abandon specific work-related problems through the seminar. Moreover, one third of the subjects consider personal development as important. Concerning the motives of less significance, it should be mentioned that practical tasks are perceived as more important than theoretical insights. This preference has been incorporated by the behaviour oriented approach of the seminars which emphasise practical exercises and experiences.

*Situation after the seminar*

The evaluation of the question regarding the satisfaction of the participants with the workshop demonstrates that:

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| 77.0 % | were very satisfied   |
| 29.8 % | felt that the subjects covered exceeded their expectations      |
| 96.6 % | were absolutely not or rather not disappointed with the seminar |

Apart from this, 43.6 % of the participants felt that their needs and concerns had an impact on the way in which the seminar was conducted.

*Transfer opportunity*

The question concerning the applicability of the subjects to the work situation was rated as follows:

- 42.4 % can apply the subjects covered very well (“strongly” and “absolutely”)
- 53.6 % found the content of the seminar “partly” applicable
- 4.0 % did not see the possibility to apply the learned knowledge in daily work

The question, whether the seminar exercises helped to solve work-related problems, was answered in the following way:

- 33.3 % replied with “Yes” (“strongly” and “absolutely”)
- 56.6 % of the participants were able to use the experience acquired in the exercises for solving work-related problems
- 9.9 % found the exercises less or not useful

The responses to the item, “From today’s perspective, I can say that the seminar has supported me in my work” are listed below:

- 34.4 % agreed completely
- 53.6 % partly received benefit from the seminar
- 12.0 % did not experience any relief in work-related issues

Concerning the item of personal development:

- 46.4 % of the participants stated that the benefit they received from the seminar had a big impact
- 47.2 % had the opinion that the seminar helped their personal development
- 6.5 % did not experience a further personal development through the seminar
- 2.4 % of the participants did not see how to integrate the subjects covered into their working life at the end of the seminar
- 68.3 % were able to transfer the lessons learned to working life without any problem



How often the participants were able to apply the lessons learned was answered in the following way:

46.4 % of the subjects can apply it very often or always, while

53.6 % apply it very seldom or just sometimes

The item, “If it was possible to apply lessons learned, how often does it happen, that you could apply them but choose not to?” were replied to as follows:

8.5 % answered with “often”

47.3 % responded with “never” or “seldom”

All in all, the results suggest that the lessons learned in the seminar are well applicable to daily work. The findings about practicability, personal development as well as the frequency of implementation are to be emphasised in particular. The use of the experiences acquired during the practical exercises to solve work-related issues is consistent with the results of the questions regarding the state before the participation in a seminar. In addition, the behaviour oriented approach of the seminars met the participants’ expectation of how to solve an issue related to working life. In summary these findings once again show the big impact of practical exercises as part of seminars.

### *The support of others*

“How do others react towards your seminar attendance?” The answers to this item show:

32.5 % of the participants stated that their supervisor encouraged them “strongly” or “absolutely” to apply lessons learned

31.7 % - about the same number of people as above – did “not at all” or “rather not” feel supported by their supervisors

13.7 % felt left alone concerning the application of lessons learned

11.1 % thought that many colleagues were lacking understanding for such developmental measures

The evaluation reveals that the participants of behaviour-oriented seminars felt they received more encouragement from their supervisors rather than from their colleagues.

*The Companies' Support*

The question regarding the measures with which the company supports the learning of the participants was answered as follows:

53.3 % of the participants spoke with their supervisor before they went to the seminar

59.5 % stated that their supervisor spoke to them after they had returned from the seminar

Of those 53.3 % who did have a discussion with their supervisor before the seminar answered

14.2 % that it was helpful to have had this discussion

24.2 % that it was partly helpful and

15.0 % that it was rather not or not helpful

Further measures implemented by the companies

18.6 % of the participants were asked to write a report about what they had learned

27.4 % had a follow up meeting with other seminar participants after the seminar

30.2 % set goals and objectives with their supervisors

To investigate the content of the discussion if the supervisors decided to speak to their employees before or after the seminar, we asked the following question: "If you had a discussion with your supervisor, what subjects did you discuss?"

19.1 % spoke about the expectations the supervisor had of their employees

34.8 % discussed the expectations of the employees themselves

47.7 % debated about the seminar subjects

42.1 % went into the seminar goals

44.0 % spoke about the meaning of the subjects in regard to the work situation

21.5 % debated about how the subjects could be implemented

### *Additional Evaluation*

In addition to the general survey, we took the opportunity to ask for the perceived effect of the seminar measures implemented by the Human Resource Development trainers.

One of these measures belonging to the comprehensive programme of the seminars is the preparation of the participants with a letter of invitation in advance of the seminar. It includes the seminar goals and content as well as introduction of the trainers responsible and some questions regarding the expectations and conceptions of the participants.

Our Human Resource Development concepts are based on the principles of participant oriented accelerated learning. We support the system theory and construct our measures correspondently.

We have embraced the saying

“Dear trainer...

- tell me, I'll listen to what you know and then I'll forget it all,
- show me, then I'll see what you can do and I'll maybe remember
- let me do it myself and I can learn and appreciate it!”

Behavioural changes are best attained through practice of the behaviour itself. For that reason, our participants not only expect presentation units and short input of theory, but the opportunity to actually try out (new) gained behavioural skills within the seminar. This procedure increases the chance to integrate these skills into the individual behavioural repertoire and to develop new individual variations of behaviour.

For “...it is a special version of insanity to always do the same, but hope for a different outcome.” (Albert Einstein)

The practical exercises, as well as reminder letters or mails, which are sent to the participants after a certain time span after the seminar, serve to stabilise the acquired knowledge.

As the worm has to be eaten by the fish and not by the fisherman we asked how the participants experience our implementations to facilitate the transfer from knowledge to actual behaviour.

Our specific questions therefore asked:

- The advance questions concerning the seminar expectations
- The practical exercises conducted during the seminar
- Receipt of the “letter to self” after 4 weeks
- The reminder mail after 4 months

The answers resulted as follows:

- 40.8 % of the participants found, that the advance questions concerning the seminar expectations were helpful
- 33.7 % declared that the “letter to self” was helpful and
- 29.8 % also benefited from the reminder mail

In summary 76.2 % of the subjects experienced the practical exercises as supportive.

### *Conclusion*

The more time supervisors and employees invest to discuss the reasons for taking part in a seminar, what is expected of the seminar outcome, and the more support the trainer provides with the preparation of the participants, the bigger will be the success of the seminar.

Also, the effect of learning and the transfer of knowledge for the whole team or company will be more significant, the more the supervisors as well as the colleagues of the participants are integrated after the seminar, the more attentive and concrete the transfer measures are.

These sentences may appear like common sense, but in real life they are as rare or as common as the matter-of-facts in the preface of this paper.

What is the participants' opinion? The figures of the survey speak for themselves.

*List of Contributors: The following companies and their employees participated in the study*

AUCOTEAM Berlin GmbH	Henkel Genthin GmbH
Australische Botschaft	Hettich GmbH und Co. KG
Bankgesellschaft Berlin LBB	hmp Heidenhain-Microprint GmbH
Bausch & Lomb	HQ, US Army Europe
Becker & Kries Immobilien Management GmbH & Co. KG	IDEAL Automotive Berlin GmbH
Berliner Bank AG Co. KG	Investitionsbank Berlin
Berliner Sparkasse	Lorenzen & Partner Architekturbüro
Bombardier Transportation GmbH	Pediatric Clinic Würzburg
Bürgerschaftsbank zu Berlin-Brandenburg	Ramstein Air Base
BBB	Rundfunk Berlin Brandenburg (RBB)
Cornelsen Verlag	REXAM BEVERAGE CAN Berlin GmbH
Cosmed-Productions GmbH	Siemens AG
Defense Reutilization and Marketing Service	Sumitomo Electric Bordnetze GmbH
Deutsche Telekom AG	ThyssenKrupp Xervon GmbH
Deutsches Rotes Kreuz	TOTAL Deutschland GmbH
E.ON Avacon AG	T-Systems
Fraunhofer Gesellschaft e.V.	URBANIS GmbH
General Support Center Europe	Vattenfall Europe Berlin AG & Co. KG
George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies	Weiss Spindeltechnologie GmbH
GO! General Overnight & Express Logistik GmbH	WEMAG AG
GRUNDY Light Entertainment GmbH	Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks
	Zschimmer & Schwarz Mohsdorf GmbH & Co. KG

*Summarised suggestions for practical application to the work life: Training is great – Transfer is better*

There are many factors which determine the success of transferring the lessons learned in the seminar to daily work. The supervisor takes a leading part in this script.

One example of how “transfer” does not work; Unbelievable, but true: A company in Belgrade offered a presentation training for their supervisors.

The seminar took place and the supervisors learned how to instrumentalise colourful symbols and presentation material . But after the seminar a problem arose: the case containing the elaborate tools and expensive materials was not available in former Yugoslavia. The supervisors now had new knowledge but did not have the tools to apply it. (Example extracted from: managerSeminare, book 60 10/02)

*What is understood under a “transfer-discussion” and what is its procedure?*

The actual “transfer” starts before the seminar, for the invitation letters are sent to the participants ahead of time. There should also be a discussion with the supervisor before the beginning of the seminar. This dialogue is aimed at framing the individual goals regarding the seminar together with the employee. This is an important step in order for the participant to know which parts to focus on during the seminar.

Discussions after the seminar prevent the “back home effect”: They help to avoid neglecting contents in the rush of everyday life, which during the seminar, were considered important.

Supervisors and employees must discuss what in particular the participants should implement, which resources are needed for the transfer, and what the supervisor can contribute, so that he and the participants’ colleagues do not “stand in the way” during the realisation of the changes.

Some examples of questions which the supervisor and the employee can discuss before the seminar in order to set clear goals are:

- What changes do you see for yourself (Mr./ Mrs. Employee), for me and for our clients after your attendance at the seminar?
- What are your concrete aims regarding the contents of the seminar? (This issue can be addressed to the employee as well as at to supervisor himself.)
- When will you know when you have reached these goals?
- What will you do to secure the transfer of the learned subjects after the seminar?
- Which difficulties do you expect?

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- How can you prepare to deal with these difficulties beforehand?
- Which support do you need from my side?
- Which objectives can we agree upon based on our discussion?

Thoughts shortly after the seminar:

- How did the seminar go from your point of view? (Content, methods, trainer, transfer orientation)?
- What would you like to implement after the seminar? Which goals do you have? Do these goals correspond with the goals framed in the discussion before the seminar?
- Which support or equipment do you need to realize your goals?
- Which subjects could be useful for our team/our department? (optional partnership learning, know-how transfer through presentations given by the participants in team meetings)

Efficiency control after four weeks:

- Which goals were you able to completely or partly realise?
- Which changes did you experience concerning the transfer?
- Which changes do you think I, as your supervisor, have noticed?
- Where did you see difficulties in the implementation of the lessons learned? What were the reasons for the problems? Do you have criticism or suggestions for me?
- What can be done to secure the learning success in the long run?
- Was the advanced training correctly chosen in retrospect?
- As your supervisor I have the following expectations of you...

These questions, of course, are just examples. Each discussion is always shaped by the individual agreement regarding the practical work which is important for the supervisor and his team.

The kinds of questions asked are secondary... Important is the appreciation the employee receives from his supervisor. Acknowledgement itself increases the likelihood for higher involvement, motivation and qualitatively better work of the participants. This method results in suggestions and intentions that last longer than New Year's resolutions.

## About Gartner-Steffen Training and Development:

### *We are a Team*

This gives you the opportunity to access a wide range of subjects and utilise training and consulting services from one single source – both in the German and English languages and with an extremely flexible schedule.

In addition to practical work experience in managerial and supervisory positions, all trainers have acquired numerous years of training and consulting experience.

Furthermore, all trainers are not only professionally qualified and/or educated but have also completed further training to become trainers specializing in additional areas of education.

By means of on-going supervision, we reflect over our work and amend and update our programmes continuously via our own further education. We monitor current trends and tendencies for possible inclusion in Human Resource Development procedures and implementing these where and whenever necessary to fit your company's requirements.

Thus, you can be sure of receiving service that meets your needs and wishes, while always focusing on the central issue – people and task.



### *We practise what we preach...*

...that applies to the work in our team as well as to the work with you. Human Resource Development reflects not only our philosophy and behaviour, but more important, what we can do for you and your company.

### Address



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