2009

An examination of supervisory support as a factor affecting training transfer in a sales organization

Michael L. Patterson

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/etd

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

AN EXAMINATION OF SUPERVISORY SUPPORT AS A FACTOR AFFECTING

TRAINING TRANSFER IN A SALES ORGANIZATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Michael L. Patterson

July 2009

Mark Allen, Ph.D.–Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Michael L. Patterson

Under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 21, 2009

Faculty Committee:

_____

Mark Allen, Ph.D., Chairperson

_____

Doug Leigh, Ph.D.

_____

Kent B. Rhodes, Ed.D.

_____

Eric R. Hamilton, Ph.D.
Associate Dean

_____

Margaret J. Weber, Ph.D.
Dean

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Eunice, my son, Michael, and daughters, Hannah, Jacqueline, Jessica, and Justine. Thank you for your patience with all of my academic excursions throughout the years and for allowing me to indulge my passion for learning. Your encouragement and unfailing commitment energizes me, and the laughter we share—often at my expense—keeps me humble. I am blessed beyond belief.

I also recognize that the abilities and opportunities I have are given to me by my Creator; therefore, all glory and honor are the Lord's. I pray that he will use me in his service and make me a blessing to others. To God be the glory—great things he has done!

ACKNOWLDEGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge a few of the many people who have contributed

directly or indirectly to my work. At the top of this long list, I would like to acknowledge

and thank my chair, Dr. Mark Allen. Dr. Allen's clear and timely feedback, guidance, and

professionalism were incredibly helpful during this process. I will incorporate the lessons

learned from Dr. Allen throughout the rest of my career. I would also like to

acknowledge and thank my committee members Dr. Doug Leigh and Dr. Kent Rhodes.

Dr. Leigh's expertise in qualitative research methodologies and insightful

recommendations allowed me to pursue research that was meaningful to me. Dr. Kent

Rhodes, the first professor I encountered in the doctoral program, was an inspiration and

a constant supporter from start to finish.

Along with these key faculty members, I would also like to recognize all of the

other people who traveled the doctoral road with me during the last few years. To the

faculty members who challenged me and expanded my thinking, thank you for your

dedication and commitment to your students. To my classmates in the Irvine cohort,

thanks for your cooperation, consideration, and support. We stuck together from

beginning to end and made memories along the way that will last a lifetime. Finally, to

the Pepperdine GSEP staff that makes everything run smoothly—particularly Christie

Dailo—thank you for working tirelessly in our behalf.

Finally, I must acknowledge and thank managers and coworkers who supported

and made accommodations for me as I pursued my doctoral studies. In some cases, this

meant rescheduling meetings, limiting my travel during certain seasons, and generally

being a great support system. I also appreciate the financial assistance my company

provided in support of my studies. I hope the contributions I have made in the recent past

and will make in the future will create a return on investment that exceeds everyone's

expectations. In short, I have long worked with great people in a great company.

VITA

Education

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership	2009
Graduate School of Education and Psychology	
Pepperdine University	

Certificate in Biblical Studies   2004
Talbot School of Theology
Biola University

Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership   2002
Biola University

Master of Public Administration   1987
Troy State University

Bachelor of Arts in Social Science   1984
Wheaton College

Professional History

Takeda Pharmaceuticals America   2008–Present
Director, Regional Leadership Development

TAP Pharmaceuticals   1990–2008
National Manager, Management Development
Senior Regional Sales Manager
Group Manager, Managed Markets
Senior Product Manager
District Sales Manager
Program Training Manager
Professional Sales Representative

California Army National Guard   1990–1992

United States Army   1984–1990

ABSTRACT

Research indicates that more than 80% of the knowledge and skills gained in company-sponsored training programs is not applied in the workplace, but there is a growing body of evidence that recognizes managerial involvement as a primary factor in improving training transfer. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of supervisors as they endeavor to facilitate training transfer for their direct reports within one pharmaceutical sales organization. The rationale for the study derives from the researcher's desire to understand the present behavior of supervisors and use these insights to guide the development of management training strategies.

The purposefully selected sample was composed of 14 district managers and regional sales directors who were all employees of a large, research-based pharmaceutical company in the United States. The data-collection method was in-depth interviews. After the data was coded and analyzed, several findings emerged: (a) all managers had pretraining interactions with their direct reports, but approaches varied widely; (b) most managers reported having a more intentional and structured approach to posttraining interactions, but few managers described actions that supported sustained behavioral change; (c) most managers had little purposeful contact with their direct reports during training events; (d) study participants had not received a great deal of support from their managers in support of their efforts to apply newly acquired skills; and (e) lack of time and competing priorities were considered to be the primary barriers preventing managers from doing more to promote training transfer.

This research revealed that supervisors have only a general sense of what to do, but lack the skills necessary to promote training transfer effectively and do not

understand why these practices are important. The research also suggests that organizational factors such as workload, competing priorities, and lack of executive involvement contribute to suboptimal performance.

Recommendations are offered for organizational leaders and for further research possibilities. Recommendations for practitioners mainly include setting clear expectations, training supervisors on best practices, and providing a support system that creates easy access to tools and resources. Further research should address whether these findings are consistent in other organizational settings.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In a rapidly changing global business environment in which innovation, speed, and efficiency are often necessary for success, organizations must constantly work to upgrade and enhance employees' skills (Ford, 1997). However, the role and perceived importance of training as a means to improved performance in organizations has grown over time. Taylor (1911) initially recognized the value of training as he developed the scientific principles of management in the early part of the 20th century. He assumed that performance could be improved by segmenting job functions into specific tasks and providing employees with training to do those tasks. In the middle of the 20th century, McGehee (1949), in one of the first comprehensive studies of industrial training, recognized several significant training advances that occurred during the decade that included World War II. Later, Campbell (1971) considered the growing importance of training during the 1950s and 1960s, followed by Tannenbaum and Yukl's comprehensive review of the discipline in 1992. With each successive generation, researchers in the field have recognized the growth of training as an organizational response to competitive challenges and a changing environment.

Changing demographics, workplace structures, increased global competition, and rapidly advancing technology has made the need for effective employee training greater than ever (Ford, 1997). This is because even in today's complex, ultracompetitive, and technology-driven environment, organizational leaders believe that employees can provide a competitive advantage (Pfeffer, 1994). Those who hold this belief often subscribe to the view that knowledge will soon become the dominant means of production, taking precedence over raw materials, labor, and even capital (Drucker, 1992;

1

Stewart, 1997). Consistent with this opinion, senior executives are placing a greater emphasis on workplace learning and development, and the creation of effective training strategies (London & Moore, 1999).

Unfortunately, the creation of effective training strategies is often not an easy or intuitive process. No longer stand-alone events, training must be fully integrated with the business strategy of the organization and address the learning needs of diverse, global workforces if it is to be effective (Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001). This all-important link to an organization's strategy is what makes a corporate university a unique educational entity (Allen, 2002).

The perceived need for more training and the intricacies involved in its implementation has led to an enormous investment among American companies. According to an annual survey conducted by the American Society of Training and Development, "U.S. organizations spent $134.39 billion on employee learning and development in 2007" (as cited in Paradise, 2008, p. 46). The survey also found that companies in the United States spent an average of $1,103 per employee for training in 2007, up from $704 per employee in 2000 (Van Buren & Erskine, 2002). This substantial financial investment has garnered the attention of top executives and economists, as well as practitioners and researchers who are interested in learning-related technologies and services, performance improvement, and understanding the degree to which training is transferred to the workplace (Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001).

Although employer-provided training can increase the effectiveness and efficiency of employees (Swanson, 1992), it does not guarantee improved performance to companies that invest huge amounts of time and money. It is the ability of workers to

transfer positively training received into behaviors and skills that enhance workplace performance that often determines competitive advantage and validates the substantial financial investments made (Van Buren & Erskine, 2002). Providing the training is just a part of the process. The training must be manifested as changed workplace behaviors that lead to improved organizational results (Kirkpatrick, 1967, 1996a). In some cases, organizational leaders can then measure the return on this investment (Phillips, 1996).

Measuring learning transfer and the degree to which training truly impacts company results has been a challenging matter that has received considerable attention in the literature during the last several years. Kirkpatrick's (1967, 1996a) four-level model—reaction, learning, behavior, and results—provides a framework to measure training effectiveness. Although Salas and Cannon-Bowers (2001) remind us of the popularity and functional nature of Kirkpatrick's typology as a tool for evaluating training, Bartel (2000) notes that most organizations do not even measure beyond the first two levels of Kirkpatrick's model.

Attempting to address that many organizations are not fully implementing or have criticisms of Kirkpatrick's measurement model, other researchers have sought to develop more robust diagnostic measures. Kraiger, Ford, and Salas (1993) proposed a measurement of learning that addresses cognitive-, affective-, and skill-based results. Phillips (1996) proposes a formula to measure the financial return for investments in training. More recently, Mooney and Brinkerhoff (2008) have challenged the broader methodologies of Kirkpatrick and Phillips, recommending that the primary focus of evaluation be on application. The research in this area continues as others seek to develop richer and more sophisticated typologies that will serve both scholars and practitioners. In

the mean time, a true measure of training's impact is difficult to gauge accurately.

With a relative lack of reliable data in this area, the degree to which training is transferred is often estimated and reports in the literature are varied. Georgenson (1982) estimates that employees translate only about 10% of what they learn in the classroom to positive behavioral change in the workplace. Newstrom (1986), Garavaglia (1993), and Baldwin and Ford (1988) are a bit more generous in their estimates, but they suggest that no more than 20% of training is transferred to the workplace. J. J. Phillips and P. P. Phillips' (2007) research "shows that 60%–90% of job-related skills and knowledge in a learning program are not being implemented on the job" (p. 135). Saks and Belcourt (2006) suggest substantially higher rates of transfer initially, but concede that transfer decays by as much as 50% within 1 year. Summarizing these concerns, Brinkerhoff (2006) reports, "Only 15 out of 100 people that receive new training eventually use it in ways that produce valuable performance results" (p. 303). Regardless of what estimate is used, it is certainly not what employers intend or need as they seek to develop a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

That many of the skills and behaviors learned in the classroom are not carried back and applied in the workplace has led both researchers and organizational leaders to examine the factors that influence training transfer. Baldwin and Ford (1988) identify trainee characteristics, training design, and work environment as major training input factors that directly affect transfer. In a more recent integrative review of the literature, Burke and Hutchins (2007) continue to use three broad categories—individual, intervention, and environmental—to characterize the variables that influence the application of training. While there is strong evidence to suggest that all of these factors

impact behavioral change, the weight of the evidence suggests that the support trainees receive from their managers is probably the most consistent and powerful dynamic (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Clarke, 2002; Cohen, 1990; Huczynski & Lewis, 1980; Weiss, Huczynski, & Lewis, 1980).

These data raise important concerns for researchers, trainers, and organizational leaders. American companies invest billions of dollars each year in training interventions in an attempt to improve human performance and gain a competitive advantage. However, scholars and practitioners report that most of the training content delivered is never applied in the workplace. This means that the value of the training or the return on that substantial investment is quite small. Yet we also find clear evidence that supervisors and managers can positively affect behavior change and help employees apply newly learned skills on the job.

Statement of the Problem

Lack of training transfer both inhibits organizational results and creates a poor return on a substantial investment by U.S. businesses (Anthony & Norton, 1991; Burke, 1997; Newstrom, 1986). With more than 80% of the knowledge and skills gained in training not being applied on the job (Brinkerhoff, 2006; Broad & Newstrom, 1992; Garavaglia, 1993), organizations must clearly identify the factors that promote or prevent the regular use of newly learned skills in the workplace (Noe & Schmitt, 1986).

Fortunately, a growing body of knowledge in this field has increased the understanding of these factors (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001; Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992; Yamnill & McLean, 2001). As this discipline develops, researchers are demonstrating that managers can positively influence learning transfer by

holding discussions with employees that focus on the value and relevance of trained

skills, the reason for the employee's selection for training, and how the training fits into

the employee's overall developmental plan (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Brinkerhoff &

Montesino, 1995; Clarke, 2002; Gregoire, Propp, & Poertner, 1998; Huczynski & Lewis,

1980; Quiñones, Ford, Sego, & Smith, 1995; Richman-Hirsch, 2001; Salas & Cannon-

Bowers, 2001; Smith-Jentsch, Salas, & Brannick, 2001). Yet, it is not clear to what extent

these management actions are occurring in typical organizations. We also do not know

what factors inhibit supervisory interventions. These factors might include a lack of time,

limited knowledge or skills, or a perception that there is no value in these activities, but

little research has been conducted in this area. Further research is needed to address these

questions and to provide information that organizational leaders might use to mitigate

those factors that limit supervisory support of training transfer in specific organizational

contexts.

Purpose of the Study

Although the literature identifies several dynamics that affect the application of

classroom learning to behavior on the job, this study will only focus on the actions of

supervisors in the training transfer process. With that in mind, the purpose of this

phenomenological study will be to understand the lived experience of supervisors as they

endeavor to facilitate training transfer for their direct reports within one pharmaceutical

sales organization. The facilitation of training transfer will be generally defined as the

interactions supervisors have with their direct reports that relate to learning activities and

the actions supervisors take to support the integration of newly learned skills with job

functions.

The overarching question in this phenomenological research study is: What are the lived experiences of supervisors as they endeavor to facilitate training transfer for their direct reports within one pharmaceutical sales organization? In this study, as in many phenomenological studies, the term lived experience is used to emphasize "the importance of the individual experiences of people as conscious human beings" (Creswell, 2007, p. 236) and serves as the basis for understanding the phenomenon or "object of human experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 163). Richards and Morse (2007) further explain that "lived experience is critical to phenomenology" (p. 49) because "perceptions present us with evidence of the world—not as it is thought to be, but as it is lived" (p. 49). Therefore, understanding the lived experience of supervisors might provide new insights to their behavior and more effectively guide strategies designed to improve the application of learned skills to the workplace.

Key Terms and Operational Definitions of Variables

For the purpose of this study, "training is defined as the systematic acquisition of skills, rules, concepts, or attitudes that result in improved performance in another environment" (Goldstein, 1993, p. 3). Learning is defined by the American Society of Training Development as "the process of gaining knowledge, understanding, or skill by study, instruction, or experience" (as cited in Biech, 2008, p. 875) and will be used interchangeably with training for the purposes of this study. Training or learning, in the context of this study, takes place in a classroom environment.

"Positive transfer of training is defined as the degree to which learners apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained in a training context to the job…maintained over a

7

period of time" (Baldwin & Ford, 1988, p. 63). For the purposes of this study, the terms training transfer and learning transfer will be used interchangeably. The transfer system will be used to refer to "all factors in the person, training, and organization that influence transfer of learning to job performance" (Holton, Bates & Ruona, 2000, p. 335). Organizational transfer climate refers to the situations and consequences that help or hinder the positive transfer of training within an organization (Rouillier & Goldstein, 1993).

While there is a common understanding of the term supervisor, there might be unique or more precise connotations in particular organizational settings. Supervisor, for the purpose of this study, is defined as one who independently determines or directly influences the performance ratings of subordinates, determines work assignments, and determines or recommends disciplinary action to be imposed on employees (Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act, 1979). For the purposes of this study, the term manager will be used interchangeably with supervisor.

Importance of the Study

Although previously published research is clear that supervisors and managers play an important role in training transfer, relatively little is known about the degree to which these frontline leaders are actively engaged in the process in typical organizational settings. In addition to providing insight on this important question, the study will also provide greater understanding of the factors that supervisors perceive as influencing their ability to facilitate learning transfer. The study has implications for a variety of stakeholders, including learning and development professionals, human resources practitioners, training strategists, educational researchers, and organizational leaders who

make resource allocation decisions. With new insight in this area, stakeholders will have the ability to leverage training resources in ways that yield better results.

The findings of this research might also offer guidance for how supervisors and managers are trained to promote learning transfer. As a result, recommendations for training curricula might be formed. Additionally, the results of this research will illuminate the environmental factors supervisors perceive as detrimental to the transfer process and how they could be mitigated. With this information, training strategists and executives could develop plans and best practices that will improve training transfer and ultimately provide significantly higher returns on training investments. Managers and frontline supervisors can then be made aware of these best practices, either through formalized training or coaching, and thereby become more effective in how they help employees acquire and apply new skills. Finally, the theoretical literature will be expanded as a result of this new insight gained through a better understanding of the activities of managers in a typical organizational environment.

Limitations

The limitations of this study largely relate to the context in which it is conducted. With a focus on only sales managers in one organization, it might be difficult to make universal application of its findings in other organizational contexts. There will likely be questions about whether the supervisors of sales people have different lived experiences than supervisors in a manufacturing environment, a customer service environment, or a government agency. There might also be questions about whether sales professionals respond differently to training than do those working in other fields. As a phenomenological study, only a small percentage of the overall population will take part

in the research, so legitimate questions might also be raised about whether the findings of the research are applicable to the entire group of sales managers or the entire organization.

Assumptions

The researcher makes two key assumptions about this study. First, the researcher assumes that study participants will honestly respond to research-related questions and will freely share their experiences. The researcher also assumes that he will be able to separate his personal experiences from the experiences of study participants, accurately record the data, and draw rational conclusions from the available information.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized to allow the reader gain an understanding of the problem and recognize why it should become the focus of more careful study. Chapter 2 will offer a review of the present literature related to the issues under consideration and will provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the problem. The third chapter discusses the design of the study, the specific questions that will be addressed, how the information will be gathered, and how the data will be analyzed. The findings of the study are presented in Chapter 4. The final chapter of the study offers conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Overview

This chapter explores the major literature relevant to learning theory, andragogy, training transfer, relapse prevention, and evaluation. Chapter 2 will begin by providing a general overview of learning theory, followed by a review of adult learning principles, a consideration of the major theories associated with learning transfer, and then will address the role that supervisors play in promoting training transfer before and after the training event. This will be followed by a selective review of the literature related to relapse prevention. The chapter will conclude with a brief consideration of evaluation.

Theories of Learning

Senge (1990) aptly notes, "Human beings are designed for learning" (p. 7). While few would dismiss the wonder of a child learning to take his or her first steps or stringing words together to form fragile sentences, the means by which these miracles occur and what the term learning denotes are worthy starting points in the study of how learning is translated into behavior change in the workplace. Because learning theory is such a broad topic, the scope of this section will be to provide only a general overview of the major theories of learning. However, at the outset, some definitional groundwork is in order.

Learning: What Is It?

A solid conceptual understanding of what is meant by learning is a necessary starting point for this study. As a preface to this, Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005) suggest that there is an important distinction to be made between education and learning. "*Education* is an activity undertaken or initiated by one or more agents that is designed to effect changes in the knowledge, skill, and attitudes of individuals, groups, or

communities…[it] emphasizes the educator" (p. 10). Learning, on the other hand, "emphasizes the person in who the change occurs or is expected to occur" (p. 10), involves behavior change, and the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes on the part of the learner.

Other authors confirm this theme of change and growth as being integral to learning. Crow and Crow (1963) note, "Learning involves change. It is concerned with the acquisition of habits, knowledge, attitudes…any change in behavior implies that learning is taking place" (p. 1). Burton (1963) echoes this by stating, "Learning is a change in the individual…which fills a need and makes him more capable of dealing adequately with his environment" (p. 7). Remarking on the agreement among theorists, Haggard (1963) recognizes learning to be "a change in behavior as the result of experience" (p. 20). Clearly, there is little debate, as these theorists see learning as a change process that affects behavior.

Learning Theories

Noting roots in both psychology and philosophy, Bower and Hilgard (1998) refer to the study of learning as "experimental epistemology" (p. 1) and provide an often-cited summary of modern learning theory. The authors place the major theories into two camps: empiricism and rationalism. Other authors, including Knowles et al. (2005), identify this major dichotomy of learning theories as "behaviorist/connectionist theories and cognitive/gestalt theories" (p. 22), but point out that not all learning theories fit into either of these categories.

Behaviorism. Accepted by nearly all major theorists of the first half of the 20th century such as Ivan Pavlov, Edward Thorndike, John Watson, Edwin Guthrie, Clark

Hull, and B. F. Skinner (Ormrod, 1995), the main premise of empiricism is that "learning occurs through contiguous association of events and ideas" (Bower & Hilgard, 1998, p. 15). Terry (2003) refers to this approach as behaviorism and notes its emphasis on "the relationship among, first, observable behaviors, second, the antecedent stimuli that precede behavior, and third, the consequences that follow behavior" (p. 20). This principle reflects an ongoing relationship between stimulus and response; therefore, behaviorism is often referred to as S-R psychology (Ormrod, 1995).

Behaviorists theorize that, other than a few basic species-specific instincts, "organisms enter the world as blank slates" (Ormrod, 1995, p. 16). Conditioning, a term behaviorists tend to use more often than learning, occurs when environmental influences result in behavior change. Hence, behaviorist tradition is aligned with the essential definition of learning previously noted.

Cognitivism. Cognitive psychologists tend to focus on how "individuals process the stimuli they encounter—that is, how individuals perceive, interpret, and mentally store the information they receive from the environment" (Ormrod, 1995, p. 163). Terry (2003) suggests that the cognitive approach is analogous to processes within a computer. In this approach, individuals are said to form "an internal representation that is used as the basis for further processing or guiding behavior" (p. 21). The origins of many of the assumptions associated with cognitive approach are linked to the Gestalt psychologists of the early 20th century such as Max Wertheimer, Edward Tolman, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vygotsky (Ormrod).

These Gestalt psychologists resisted the idea that learning was simply a response to stimuli, instead believing that individuals are predisposed to structure and organize

their experiences in certain ways. In other words, stimuli are perceived in structured wholes, rather than in small, disconnected parts (Knowles et al., 2005) and follow certain laws of organization. These views suggest, "New information is most easily acquired when people can associate it with things that have already learned" (Ormrod, 1995, p. 190), a foundational principle of adult learning theory.

Adult Learning Theory

Malcolm Knowles (Knowles et al., 2005) is acknowledged to be the father of adult learning theory. Drawing on the work of education theorists, clinical psychologists, developmental psychologists, and philosophers, Knowles developed an andragogical theory of adult learning. Using a vastly different approach than pedagogy's teacher-directed approach, Knowles' learner-centered conceptualization is based on six assumptions about how adults learn:

1. Adults need to know why they should learn something before investing the time and energy in learning it. The facilitator of adult learning or someone with influence in the learner's life can point out how acquiring new knowledge or skills might enrich the learner's life or lead to improved performance; however, there are other, sometimes more potent, ways to make the case. The learner's own experiences, along with performance feedback, exposure to role models and mentors, and assessments can make it clear that there are gaps between where the learner is and where the learner wants to go. Understanding the gaps can provide the rationale for learning that adults need.

2. Most adults' self-concept is one of independence and a desire to make decisions that affect their own lives. Adult learners often resist when being

told that they must learn certain information and avoid being placed in a position of dependence. Adults prefer situations in which they can self-direct their learning.

3. Adults come to the learning process with more experience than children. These experiences bring both positive and negative effects to the learning process. From a positive perspective, facilitators of learning can tap into these often diverse backgrounds to enrich group discussions, drive simulation activities, make valuable use of case studies, and increase peer-to-peer interaction. On the negative side, adults often come to learning events with preconceived notions and limiting mental models that cause them to resist new ideas and approaches to problem solving.

4. Adults want to learn those things that will help them deal with the problems and issues of real life. Timing or the learner's stage of life is often related to readiness to learn. For example, a soldier who has orders for duty in a tropical war zone is likely to be motivated to master the techniques of jungle survival and marksmanship. Readiness to learn can be induced by simulations, counseling, and exposure to mentors or role models.

5. Adults have a life-centered or problem-centered approach to learning. They are motivated to learn when they perceive that their efforts will help them perform better and solve problems more effectively. The ability to apply new ideas and skills in the context of real-life situations is also a motivator for learning.

6. Although adults are, at times, motivated to learn by external factors such as the potential for job promotions or higher income, internal factors such as self-esteem and the desire for greater job satisfaction are often more potent drivers. Tough's (1979) research findings suggest that all normal adults want to grow and develop. Unfortunately, some adult learners experience low self-esteem or other negative perceptions that create barriers to learning. Time constraints and the inability to access resources for learning are also constraints.

A solid understanding of the andragogical model is essential for understanding how training is delivered effectively in contemporary business settings. Different from the pedagogical model that "assigns the teacher full responsibility for all decision making about learning content, method, timing, and evaluation" (Knowles et al., 2005. p. 72), the andragogical model gives much greater control to learners and is more responsive to their needs.

Wisdom Management

If the essence of learning is behavior change (Burton, 1963; Crow & Crow, 1963; Haggard, 1963; Knowles et al., 2005), why is it that most corporate training is not transferred to the workplace (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Brinkerhoff, 2006; Garavaglia, 1993; Georgenson, 1982; Newstrom, 1986; Phillips, 2008; Saks & Belcourt, 2006)? Is it because real learning has not occurred or are there other factors? Allen (2007) argues that it is because organizational leaders have not been intentional in their approach to wisdom management. He defines wisdom management as "a planned and systematic process by which an organization manages how its employees use and apply their knowledge and

skills in ways that benefit the organization" (p. 391). This idea of wisdom management underlies and is informed by a growing body of literature related to the transfer of training.

<div align="center">*Theories of Learning Transfer*</div>

The scope of this section will be to consider the literature associated with the various learning transfer theories. Several theorists have been widely recognized for their learning transfer models or integrative reviews of the literature in this field, and the following will be summarized in this section: (a) Huczynski and Lewis, (b) Baldwin and Ford, (c) Noe and Schmitt, (d) Yamnill and McLean, (e) Tannenbaum and Yukl, and (f) Kozlowski and Salas. The scientific literature presented is from an organizational context.

Huczynski and Lewis

Huczynski and Lewis (1980) conducted one of the first empirical studies that explored the process of learning transfer. In the study, they compared two skill-based management courses with two specific learning objectives. Using a pretraining questionnaire and two posttraining questionnaires, the researchers sought to determine which of the training participants intended to apply what they learned on their jobs, which of the training participants followed through to experiment with new behaviors, and what organizational factors affected training transfer.

The results of Huczynski and Lewis' (1980) research reveal that 17 (35%) of the 48 respondents studied attempted to apply what they learned in class to their work. While this number seems high relative to other research findings in the broader literature, the researchers make it clear that 35% of the participants merely attempted new behavior, but

did not necessarily use the skills on a long-term basis. The researchers refer to this group as the experimenters. It is not known how many of the participants ultimately used their new skills on a sustained basis.

The more profound findings from Huczynski and Lewis' (1980) research indicate the existence of several conditions that were positively correlated to training transfer. These conditions are: (a) Participants who attended the course voluntarily were more likely to apply what they had learned in the workplace; (b) The perception that the course was relevant to their jobs and would help them in some way; and (c) Most of the participants who experimented with new behaviors in the workplace had discussed the coursework with someone else in their organizational setting before attending the training. These findings illustrate the need to create a proper organizational climate for training transfer prior to the training event.

The important role that the supervisor plays in the training transfer process is perhaps the most compelling finding from Huczynski and Lewis' (1980) research. Of those who experimented with newly learned skills, 48% had discussed the training with a superior—usually their immediate supervisor—before attending the course. Of those participants who did not attempt to try the newly learned skills on the job, only 29% had discussed the training with someone else in their organization before the training. It was found that the supervisor plays an important role after the training as well. In those situations in which the newly learned behavior was applied, sustained, and showed beneficial organizational results, the immediate supervisor demonstrated support for the innovation 70% of the time. As a result, the researchers conclude it is the "boss' attitude

and management style which were of crucial importance" (Huczynski & Lewis, p. 235) to training transfer.

The identification and charting of the factors affecting the training transfer process is a primary contribution of this important early research. The researchers determined that if trainees are given a choice to attend the training, believed that the course they would be attending was relevant to their jobs and would help them in some way, and had a discussion with a superior about the value of the course, they would be more likely to attempt application of newly learned skills following training. During the phase in which employees were experimenting with new behaviors, the boss was a primary facilitator. The research found that if the supervisor was open to new methods, listened to the trainee's ideas, and allowed the trainee the autonomy to experiment, the skills learned in training were more likely to be applied in the workplace.

Baldwin and Ford

Baldwin and Ford's (1988) primary contribution was to summarize, categorize, and critique much of the research on training transfer that had been conducted at that time and to recommend directions for future research. The framework created and the shortcomings of earlier research identified ultimately served to guide many of the studies that would occur in the field for the next decade. At the outset of their work, they acknowledged, as do most researchers in this area, the significant problem that exists is that most of the training provided by corporate America is never transferred to the workplace.

Baldwin and Ford (1988) define positive training transfer as "the degree to which trainees effectively apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained in a training context

19

to the job" (p. 63). Assumed within this definition is that the application of behaviors learned in training will be sustained throughout an extended period of time, although they did recognize that some behaviors might be displayed immediately following the training event and then rapidly decay. The authors, using existing research, developed a framework that outlines the factors that affect the training transfer process in organizational settings.

Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of the training transfer process includes: (a) training inputs, (b) training outputs, and (c) the conditions of transfer that lead to long-term application of learned skills. Training inputs address the specific characteristics of trainees, the training, and the work environment of participants. These factors directly affect learning and retention, as well as the generalization and maintenance of training.

Overall, Baldwin and Ford (1988) were highly critical of the body of research that existed at the time of their writing. As a result, they concluded:

> The limited number and the fragmented nature of the studies examining transfer are disturbing by themselves, a critical review of the existing research reveals that the samples, tasks, designs, and criteria used limit even further our ability to understand the transfer process. (p. 86)

These concerns led them to offer detailed direction for future research in this field.

While Baldwin and Ford (1988) recognized that environmental characteristics are important influencers of training transfer, they recommended that these factors be more precisely isolated and placed in an appropriate operational setting. In doing so, proper interventions could be developed and applied consistently. For example, the authors accept the importance of supervisors in the training transfer process, but they argue that

additional empirical work should be undertaken to understand better what supervisory

support entailed. When this is done, they suggest specific managerial behaviors to

increase supervisory support will be established. These suggestions served to set the stage

for future research that continues to increase our understanding of these important issues.

Noe and Schmitt

Based on their review of the literature of organizational behavior and training,

Noe and Schmitt (1986) developed a conceptual model that described influences on

trainees' motivations to learn and apply newly learned skills in the workplace. The study

methodology used to test their model involved the evaluation of a 2-day training program

designed to improve the administrative and interpersonal skills of 60 educators.

Participants provided attitudinal responses before and after the training program.

In Noe and Schmitt's (1986) model, locus of control directly influences the

learner's acquisition of new skills in training. If the trainee has an internal locus of

control, he or she is more likely to perceive that there is a link between effort and skill

mastery, as well as rewards or positive outcomes associated with program completion

and the application of newly acquired skills on the job. The authors further hypothesize

that expectations and attitudes toward the job directly impacted motivation to learn. As a

result, they suggest that individual needs analysis and skill assessment were important

steps in the pretraining preparation process. In other words, if trainees believe they have a

need to learn and that the learning will bring them some reward, they will be more

motivated to learn.

Noe and Schmitt (1986) also recognized that the degree to which trainees

psychologically identified with their jobs influenced motivation to learn. Learners who

are highly engaged with their work and perceive that the acquisition of new skills will improve performance are more likely to retain and apply new skills. Because their self-image is tied to job performance, they perceive that they will enjoy enhanced feelings of self-worth if they elevate their performance levels. The researchers also suggest that trainees who are involved in an ongoing process of self-assessment are more inclined to identify skills weaknesses and pursue learning.

Finally, Noe and Schmitt (1986) considered motivation to transfer and the impact it had as a moderating factor on the application of learned skills. They define motivation to transfer as "the trainee's desire to use the knowledge and skills mastered in the training program on the job" (p. 503). Behavior change, they conclude, would more likely occur when trainees wanted to apply what they had learned in training to their work environment. Motivation to transfer can be increased if trainees perceive that new skills will solve work-related problems, enhance their overall performance, and will be encouraged by others in the workplace.

Yamnill and McLean

Also recognizing that learning is of little value unless it is applied in a workplace environment, Yamnill and McLean (2001) reviewed the theories that describe Holton's (1996) three factors affecting the transfer process. Specifically, Yamnill and McLean's article addressed the theories of transfer motivation, design, and climate. They also described the impact of these theories on transfer motivation using the four categories described by Holton: (a) intervention fulfillment, (b) learning outcomes, (c) job attitudes, and (d) expected utility.

Of most interest for this research is Yamnill and McLean's (2001) analysis of the theories supporting transfer climate. Because transfer climate is the "mediating variable in the relationship between the organizational context and an individual's job attitudes and work behavior" (p. 203), it can either support or inhibit the application of newly acquired knowledge and skills to the work setting. The authors recognized the organization's transfer climate framework and organizational theory as important foundational considerations for understanding transfer climate.

Tannenbaum and Yukl

Tannenbaum and Yukl (1992) provided a highly regarded review of the scientific literature on training and development in an organizational context. Although their review selectively focused on the most meaningful contributions from the years 1987 to 1991, they provided a description of training theory and prescriptions for future training research. Of particular interest for this study is their analysis of pre- and posttraining environments and how these environments affect training transfer.

Tannenbaum and Yukl (1992) note, "Accumulating evidence suggests that events prior to training can influence training effectiveness [and] management actions provide cues and signals that influence employee motivation" (p. 417). These environment cues and signals result from overt actions on the part of managers and other employees, as well as through organizational policies and procedures. Some of the signals suggest that training is important and other actions reveal the degree to which employees have input or control in the process. Based on the literature, the authors recommend that these cues should be clearly developed, systematized, and communicated if they are to have the greatest positive effect. For example, does the company send clear messages about the

value of training through its promotional and evaluation policies, management direction, and trainee participation?

The posttraining environment also influences the transfer of training. Environmental elements favorable to transfer might include supervisory support, opportunities for application, necessary equipment, and rewards. Other factors, such as scorn from peers, a lack of management support, or a shortage of necessary supplies might discourage the application of new skills and knowledge in the workplace. While recognizing that the organizational environment, particularly the role of the supervisor, is a significant factor influencing training transfer, Tannenbaum and Yukl (1992) recognized that a careful examination of the organizational environment was necessary to drive training effectiveness. Noting this, Kozlowski and Salas (1997) looked more closely at the organizational context of training and how this impacts transfer.

Kozlowski and Salas

Kozlowski and Salas (1997) expanded the traditional perspective on the transfer process that focused on the individual to include organizational systems considerations. Their view is that training is embedded in team, unit, and organizational systems that must be considered in the development, delivery, and transfer of training. As such, the authors developed a conceptual model of this integrative process that considers three unifying themes: (a) level of analysis, (b) content, and (c) congruence from the perspective of climate theory.

Kozlowski and Salas (1997) recognize that "transfer is the core issue with respect to linking individual change to the requirements of the organizational system" (p. 255). They also acknowledge that contextual factors influence behavior and, in the case of

training transfer, the individual's ability to apply newly acquired knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the workplace. With that in mind, they recommend an expansion of the organizational conceptualizations presented in Baldwin and Ford's (1988) review of the literature to include a broader, theoretically based, framework that more specifically addresses the contextual effects on training transfer. From this broader perspective, the important role of the supervisor becomes even more evident. The way in which this role is manifested both before and after training events is well represented in the literature and presented in the next two sections.

The Supervisor's Role Before Training

Trainers are typically viewed as the initiators of training events. After all, it is the training function that develops curricula, designs courses, gathers resources, and assigns facilitators long before learners arrive in classrooms. Although this perception is widely held, it is actually management that initiates the training process by identifying performance discrepancies that warrant intervention. In fact, it is often frontline supervisors who are in the best position to know whether their reports are able to perform to established standards or need new skills for better performance (Michalak, 1981). Their observations of performance shortfalls inform the design of training programs and add a sense of realism or face validity that creates credibility with program participants. Knowles et al. (2005) note that a need to know and problem-centered orientation is an important part of andragogy and essential for adult learners.

Weiss et al. (1980) addressed the superior's role in learning transfer in a small-scale study ($N = 47$), which compared two groups of participants that attended a 3-day management course. After completing the training, all participants were asked whether

they had attempted to apply what they had learned on the job. Based on their responses, researchers classified participants as either a knowledge user or nonuser and examined the differences between the two groups.

Follow-up interviews revealed that most of the respondents who attempted training transfer had chosen to attend the course as opposed to being told they must attend, believed the new skills would help them on their jobs, and had discussed the training with their immediate supervisor prior to the course. Alternatively, respondents who had not attempted transfer reported that they did not have a "clear personal goal for training" (Weiss et al., 1980, p. 18) and 71% did not discuss the course with their supervisors prior to their attendance. Furthermore, "users of training were one-and-a-half times more likely to have had pre-course discussions than non-users" (p. 20). Based on this research, it appears that precourse discussions have direct implications on transfer.

Michalak (1981) found that when managers showed a great deal of interest in the development a particular training program; assisted in the creation of relevant, problem-oriented learning materials; and expressed concern about the issues to be addressed in training before the event, they had employees who were the most likely to apply new skills in the workplace following training. Office managers who made themselves readily available to training designers and attended an after-hours training event ultimately had the top performing offices. Conversely, the three offices that had uninterested managers or managers who denied the need for a training intervention, had the lowest rate of skill application.

In addition to providing important input on the design of training programs, managers play a key role in the identification of employees who can benefit most from a

training intervention. Often, this means finding those who will be most receptive to the learning process because of a sense of need that resulted from prior failure or past performance that did not yield satisfying results. It is frontline supervisors who are usually in the best position to know who specifically has the greatest need for training.

Building on Noe's (1986) contention that participants might find training programs helpful in avoiding previously experienced negative outcomes and thus enhance their level of engagement in the program, Smith-Jentsch, Jentsch, Payne, and Salas (1996) considered whether pilots, who had previously experienced negative or unsafe flight conditions, could more effectively demonstrate targeted skills taught in an assertiveness training program as compared to participants who had not experienced negative incidents. Their research findings revealed that those pilots who had reported experiencing negative conditions prior to participating were better able to recall and demonstrate trained skills 1 week following training than those participants who had not previously experienced hazardous conditions. More specifically, pilots who had experienced three or more negative events prior to attending the training program designed to prevent such events in the future learned the most. This evidence suggests that getting the right people into the classroom in the first place is an important consideration.

Once learning needs are identified, relevant training is designed, and the employees who can benefit most are identified to attend, supervisor support, defined by Bates, Holton, and Seyler (1996) as the extent to which supervisors reinforce and encourage the transfer of training to the workplace, is considered a key variable that helps to define successful application (Quiñones et al., 1995; Richman-Hirsch, 2001; Salas &

Cannon-Bowers, 2001; Smith-Jentsch et al., 2001). One key component of this support effort is the communication that occurs prior to the training event.

Cohen (1990) recognized the positive impact of supervisory involvement through a study of 194 subjects from five different organizations who participated in 14 training programs. Survey respondents suggested that they had more favorable attitudes toward the upcoming training experience when their managers communicated with them positively about it. They also reported that they were more motivated to attend training if attendance was perceived to be voluntary rather than required by a supervisor or employer.

Facteau, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd, and Kudisch (1995) confirmed the importance of pretraining motivation as a factor in learning transfer. Looking at four forms of social support (peers, subordinates, immediate supervisor, and top management), subordinates, immediate supervisors, and top managers were able to affect positively the trainee's motivation to learn. Consistent with other research findings, the extent to which trainees perceived their immediate supervisors to support their participation in training was positively related to their motivation to learn.

In a survey of 84 human resource development (HRD) leaders, Broad (1982) identified pretraining actions on the part of managers or supervisors considered important to the success of training transfer. Some of the most highly rated were meeting with employees prior to training to explain the reasons for their selection, letting employees know that their selection was a positive action, making arrangements to have participants' work covered during the training period, and insuring that training was conveniently scheduled during work hours. More than 95% of the survey respondents

considered these pretraining actions to be a necessary component of learning transfer. Unfortunately, survey participants reported that they only saw these activities taking place about 67% of the time.

Brinkerhoff and Montesino (1995) studied the impact that managers have when they discuss their expectations with employees prior to training. They discovered that those managers who discuss their expectations with their reports prior to training increase the likelihood that learning will ultimately be reflected in improved job performance. In their study, 91 trainees from a *Fortune* 200 pharmaceutical company were randomly assigned to two groups—one in which managers discussed the importance of the training with their employees both before and after training and the other in which no management interventions occurred. Trainees who were part of a pretraining discussion with their manager reported significantly higher on-the-job usage of skills acquired in the training courses than those employees who had not discussed the training with their managers. Trainees from both groups who reported high-impact skill transfer perceived that their supervisors supported their efforts. This study confirms the important role that managers play in training transfer.

In another article, Brinkerhoff and Jackson (2003) suggest that pretraining discussions should be "a dialogue between employees and managers that creates a sharp focus and shared agreement on performance improvement objectives and that clearly links intended learning to these performance objectives and business goals" (p. 23). This conversation helps learners become clear about why they are receiving training and how the training may benefit them personally and drive business results. This, then, helps to create an alliance between the trainee and his or her manager and lays the foundation for

the partnership that facilitates training transfer. Although this alliance often begins prior to the training activity, it must continue long afterward to increase the likelihood of transfer.

Based on the strong evidence in the literature, Saks and Belcourt (2006) hypothesized that certain pretraining activities would be positively related to training transfer. To test their hypothesis, 150 training and development professionals from Canada were surveyed regarding the training activities within their respective organizations. One of the variables, supervisor involvement before training, was measured in four areas: (a) the extent to which supervisors provided support by discussing training activities prior to the learning event, (b) whether learning goals were established prior to the training event, (c) whether supervisors participated in pretraining information sessions, and (d) the degree to which supervisors provided employees with release time to prepare for training. Using regression analysis, the researchers found that the pretraining activities overall accounted for 21% of the variance in the transfer ($p <$ .001) and were significant predictors of transfer. In other words, the researchers found that supervisors who engage in supportive behaviors prior to training events contribute a more positive transfer environment within organizations.

Despite what seems to be strong evidence supporting the positive role supervisors play in training transfer prior to learning events, Chiaburu and Marinova (2005) investigated both individual and contextual factors as predictors of skill transfer and found "supervisor support was not related to either motivation to learn or to skill transfer" (p. 118). Surveying 186 employees who had participated in a corporate training program, the researchers confirmed that trainees who began the program with higher levels of

motivation reported greater skill transfer. However, unlike most previous research, Chiaburo and Marinova found that the employees' perception of the support they received from their supervisors was unrelated to training outcomes. Because this outcome was so surprising, the researchers suggested "the possibility that the relationship of supervisor support and skill transfer is a statistical artifact rather than a substantive finding" (p. 118). They concluded by noting that further research should be done in this area that separates the components of organizational support (supervisor and peer support).

<center>*The Supervisor's Role After Training*</center>

The period immediately following the conclusion of the training event is likely the most crucial in facilitating training transfer (Wexley & Baldwin, 1986), so it is during this time that managers have the greatest impact on whether new knowledge and skills learned in the classroom are ever applied on the job. Huczynski and Lewis (1980) reported that 71% of beneficial results from training occurred when the posttraining application was supported by other organizational members. The researchers further noted that 70% of the time, this support came from superiors. Based on this, Huczynski and Lewis conclude, "A supported innovation attempt, especially when supported by an immediate supervisor, has a much higher chance of successful implementation" (p. 234).

Garavaglia (1993) also reported that there is a strong correlation between training transfer and the quality and amount of management support given. When supervisors use a positive approach that includes praise and reinforcement, behavioral change is more likely to be evident 6–12 months following the training event. If supervisors use a negative approach that emphasizes consequences for failed behavior, transfer tends to

dissipate quickly and may even disappear within a year of the initial activity. In short, positive reinforcement seems to work better than negative reinforcement when it comes to training transfer.

Often this role is referred to as maintenance of behavior. Michalak (1981) defines this as "anything which keeps an acquired skill or knowledge up to a performance standard" (p. 22) and he describes several activities managers may undertake to maintain behaviors learned from training. In his research on the application of skills learned in an interpersonal skills training program in six offices at a division of a large manufacturing company, Michalak found that managers who met with their employees at the conclusion of the training program to ask what obstacles they perceived in the workplace that might prevent them from applying what they had learned demonstrated better results than those managers who did not have a follow-up discussion. He also found that the manager of the office who had the highest degree of training transfer held regular team meetings to discuss everyone's efforts to integrate trained skills into daily behaviors. In other words, this manager created a venue in which recently trained employees could share success stories, best practices, and offer one another encouragement. Finally, the managers in the top-performing offices began to integrate the language used in the workshop in staff meetings and intraoffice correspondence.

On the other end of the performance spectrum, the office that had the lowest level of behavior change as a result of the training program had a new manager who had no exposure to the training. Since this new manager had no connection with the training, he did nothing to reinforce it or even discuss concepts from the course. As a result, few

employees of this office applied any of the skills learned in the classroom (Michalak, 1981).

Gregoire et al. (1998) confirmed the importance of supervisor follow-up after training. In their study of 390 human resources workers who had been trained to identify and support clients who have issues with substance abuse, they found that trainees perceived that their training was more effective when their supervisors provided support and coaching after they returned from the training event. As a result, they were more inclined to try newly learned skills. In other words, the researchers found that trainees were more willing to attempt new things when their supervisors encouraged them to do so and provided positive reinforcement along the way.

Based on this, it seems clear that managers might also play an important role after the training event has concluded by helping their subordinates recognize what they have learned. Smircich and Morgan (1982) note this by arguing that leaders give meaning and context to the learning, and provide opportunities for action. Some leaders use vivid language and metaphors to make the application of learning emotionally appealing (Mio, Riggio, Levin, & Reese, 2005), while others simply talk about how the learning helps the team accomplish goals. Ultimately, it all seems to come down to, "Line management must ensure that the environment supports, reinforces, and rewards the learner for using the new skills and knowledge" (Robinson & Robinson, 1985, p. 82).

Management support is considered part of the transfer climate of an organization, which typically includes situational cues and consequences (Goldstein, 1993). Rouillier and Goldstein (1993) studied these components of the organizational behavior model with the operator of 102 franchised fast-food restaurants. The researchers designed

surveys that measured the transfer climate (situational cues and consequences) of each of the 102 outlets and the degree to which newly assigned assistant managers applied the skills they had recently learned in a 9-week training program. Results of the study revealed that the assistant managers who were assigned to stores with a more positive transfer climate that encouraged trainees to use what they had learned in training and rewarded them for doing so transferred more behavior onto the job.

One of the keys to transfer seems to be the degree to which trainees are given opportunities to practice what they have learned in training in the workplace. More than just talking about it, managers must provide opportunities for their team members to practice recently learned skills. Quiñones et al. (1995) considered the importance of this in a study of 118 airmen who had recently completed Air Force technical training. Airmen and their supervisors completed a series of surveys that measured individual characteristics, attitudes, and opportunities they were given to do what they had been trained to do. Results of these surveys revealed that the airmen who were given the chance to apply their skills in the workplace with coaching from positive and caring supervisors were better able to use skills learned in training 4 months following graduation.

Cromwell and Kolb (2004) confirmed these findings when they examined the impact of specific environmental factors on training transfer at 1-month, 6-month, and 1-year points following a supervisory skills training program. They conducted their research with 63 supervisors from a large university in the northeastern United States who attended an extensive skill development program. Another 18 managers who supervised program participants also completed questionnaires. The findings of this study

are consistent with the other research presented here and in the growing body of scholarly literature on this topic. Supervisory support for learning is a significant factor in whether the skills learned in training will be applied on the job. In addition, study participants reported that management support and lack of time were the two primary barriers that inhibited training transfer.

Saks and Belcourt (2006) also studied how the involvement of supervisors following training can contribute to the organization's transfer climate. Through a survey of 150 training and development professionals in Canada, they examined supervisor involvement after training in three specific areas: (a) the extent to which supervisors provide their employees with support, (b) whether supervisors provided opportunities to practice newly learned skills, and (c) the degree to which supervisors praised and rewarded employees for using new skills on the job. Their results indicated that posttraining activities overall explained 24% of the variance in transfer ($p < .001$). The researchers also found that organizations engaged in posttraining activities more often than pretraining activities.

Interestingly, when Axtell, Maitlis, and Yearta (1997) attempted to measure training transfer at 1-month and 1-year intervals following training, they did not find supervisors to be a primary factor of influence. Instead, they found that the trainees' perception of the usefulness of skills learned and the degree of autonomy employees had in deciding how to carry out their work were the most important factors in successful training transfer—especially at the 1-year mark. In a discussion of their findings that were in opposition to other scholarly research, the authors explained that there was a correlation between supervision and the degree of autonomy the employee was allowed

in trying new skills or ways of accomplishing tasks. Using that perspective, this research also supports the idea that supervisors do, in fact, help to create the environment that allows for the most effective transfer of training.

Although nearly all of the research presented in the literature is from the United States or other developed countries, the question of whether the supervisor plays the same preeminent role in training transfer in developing countries is an extremely important question for our current global economy. In a first-of-its-kind study, Xiao (1996) worked to answer this question when he examined the organizational factors that best serve learning transfer in four state-owned or joint-venture electronics companies in the Shenzhen province of China. Using a questionnaire to elicit information on organizational variables and transfer behavior, as well as performance results for each company, the researcher found that training was significantly related to improved performance on the job and that supervisors were the most significant organizational factor in the application of learning. In conclusion, Xiao states, "This further supports the idea that managerial follow-up in the workplace is necessary to improve productivity through training" (p. 71).

Lim and Johnson (2002) also focused on learning transfer from a cross-cultural perspective by studying Korean HRD professionals who had completed a 3-week HRD training program at a U.S. university. Multiple data sources including interviews, questionnaires, and document review were used to develop 10 case studies that determined each trainee's perceived degree of learning and transfer. Learning transfer was assessed 6-months after the completion of training.

Program participants reported a moderate degree of transfer. The average self-reported degree of transfer for all of the program's learning objectives was 2.6 on a 4-point Likert scale, only slightly lower than the participants' perceived degree of learning. The primary reason given for transfer was "the opportunity to use their new learning on the job" (Lim & Johnson, 2002, p. 42). Although additional factors were also given, the degree to which transfer to the job would occur was largely based on the posttraining work environment of the trainee and the involvement of the trainee's immediate supervisor. More precisely, the factors most often noted as influencing transfer were whether the supervisor discussed the importance of transferring new skills to the job, the overall level of familiarity the supervisor had with the course content, and whether the trainee received feedback or encouragement from the supervisor when application was attempted. In conclusion, the researchers noted, "Ensuring a supportive work climate may be the single most important requirement for the successful transfer of learning" (p. 46).

Awoniyi, Griego, and Morgan (2002) were surprised to find little relationship between management support and training transfer when they examined the interaction of person–environment variables on transfer of training. Using data from 293 study participants who had completed four classroom-based professional development classes, the researchers compared responses from an instrument designed to assess creativity in the workplace (Amabile, 1995) and the instrument Xiao (1996) developed to assess three components of training transfer (efficiency, quality, and productivity). While the researchers found "significant positive relationships between transfer and support for autonomy/freedom, low workload pressure, creativity, and sufficient resources" (Awoniyi et al., p. 31), they did not find "evidence for the importance of supervisory

encouragement in improving transfer of training" (p. 32). The authors suggested that a lack of clarity in the use of terms among the various studies might explain the difference in findings. More research was recommended to clarify the issues.

Concerned that there was relatively little empirical evidence for the impact of supervisors on training transfer, Dutch researchers, van der Klink, Gielen, and Nauta (2001) conducted two small studies in European banking facilities to determine what activities supervisors were undertaking to improve the transfer of training and whether these activities had any impact on workplace performance. In the first study, 27 trainees participated in a 1½-day, instructor-led class on handling complaining customers. The experimental group of 13 trainees prepared action plans for how they would apply the training on the job. Supervisors of the trainees in the experimental group received letters from the company's training department encouraging them to meet with their employees who had gone through training to discuss their application action plans. After the training, questionnaires were sent to both the experimental and comparison groups addressing job performance and the degree to which the training was being used on the job.

Van der Klink et al. (2001) found the supervisors of employees in the experimental group were more active in discussing the criteria for on-the-job application, but the job performance of these employees did not improve more dramatically than those employees in the comparison group. Rather, the performance of the trainees in the comparison group improved more, suggesting that supervisor support of training transfer had no impact on employee performance. This somewhat surprising result suggested the need for further research.

The other study conducted by van der Klink et al. (2001) was with a group of bank clerks in a large Dutch banking organization who participated in computer-assisted instruction on the legal aspects of their jobs. Before the training, trainees took a pretest to evaluate their knowledge of the subject, and then 8–10 weeks after the training, trainees were given a posttest, a questionnaire about the degree to which they were transferring the knowledge to their jobs, and a questionnaire about the support they had received from their supervisors. The trainees' supervisors also received a questionnaire about the degree to which they had observed improved performance and the support they had provided their employees in their attempts to transfer their newly acquired knowledge. The trainees' perception was that they had received little to no support from their supervisors, and yet this seemed to have minimal impact on performance or test scores. The supervisors also reported only superficial involvement with the trainees, thus corroborating the trainees' reports.

Although the researchers found that supervisors had little impact on training transfer in these two studies, they did not conclude that supervisory impact was unimportant. Instead, they suggested that more research be conducted that would identify the optimal interventions that could be undertaken by supervisors and that would determine whether additional training or assistance was necessary to enable the supervisors to act. Van der Klink et al. (2001) concluded:

> The success of this support relies on the supervisors' skills, knowledge and
> motivation for carrying out support activities to enhance trainees' transfer. The
> training and coaching of supervisors exhibiting transfer-enhancing behavior are
> therefore a major condition for the appearance of trainees' transfer. In practice,

this implication may suggest that more effort must be placed on convincing

supervisors to display certain behaviors and on coaching them to do so. (p. 60)

This conclusion supports the need for more research on the role that supervisors play in

training transfer.

Relapse Prevention Training

Originating in clinical psychology, the relapse prevention (RP) model was

developed to assist those struggling to break free of addictive behaviors and improve

long-term treatment outcomes (Marlatt & Gordon, 1980, 1985). The model involves the

application of certain behavioral self-management skills that "sensitize trainees to the

issue of skills erosion and immunizes them against environmental or situational factors

which may inhibit the use of skills" (Tziner, Haccoun, & Kadish, 1991, p. 168). Limited

research has explored the similar self-management interventions in the corporate setting

to improve training transfer and prevent relapse into previous behaviors (Marx & Karren,

1988; Noe, Sears, & Fullenkamp, 1990; Tziner et al., 1991; Wexley & Baldwin, 1986).

Three key works from this field will be presented: (a) Marx, (b) Tziner, Haccoun, and

Kadish, and (c) Burke.

Marx

Marx (1982) was one of the first to propose a cognitive-behavioral model as a

systematic approach to maintain behavior change following training interventions. Based

on Marlatt and Gordon's (1980) research on the addictive behaviors, Marx suggested a

model for long-term maintenance of training transfer using RP techniques. The methods

recommended include self-control strategies designed to help trainees understand and

cope with the problem of relapse. Trainees are encouraged to identify factors that

40

contribute to failure and develop a set of skills that will allow them to deal with difficult situations that might lead them to revert back to old ways of performing on the job and a disregard for newly acquired skills.

Marx (1982) particularly focused on the application of RP to managerial skills. Marx noted that RP trained managers are better equipped to respond to initial slips and not consider them complete failures accompanied by guilt and feelings of failure. Specific RP strategies include: (a) Awareness of the RP process, (b) Identification of high-risk situations, (c) Developing coping responses, (d) Self-efficacy, (e) Expectancies of the effects of the activity, (f) Abstinence violation effect, (g) Apparently irrelevant decisions, (h) Balanced daily life style, and (i) Programmed relapse. Marx identified a number of potential research opportunities that could further enhance understanding of the potential for RP in corporate training environments.

Tziner, Haccoun, and Kadish

Tziner et al. (1991) examined personality and situational characteristics that affect training transfer. Specifically, they conducted a study to examine the addition of an RP module at that end of a training course, trainee self-perceptions of workplace support for the application of training, and the impact of locus of control on training transfer. The three hypotheses examined were: (a) Trainees who receive RP training would show positive reactions, greater motivation to transfer training, and apply learned behaviors to a greater degree in the workplace than those who did not receive RP training; (b) Trainees with higher levels of internal locus of control would have more positive perceptions of workplace support for training transfer and a higher degree of transfer; and

(c) RP would be most beneficial for those trainees who perceived that their environment was supportive of training transfer.

Study participants were 81 military instructors (39 men and 42 women) from the Israeli Defense Forces who participated in the 2-week Advanced Training Methods course. The program was designed to teach them how to develop training programs for their own units upon completion of the course. Of the participants, 45 received RP training and 36 participants received no RP training and were considered the control group. The RP module consisted of an additional 2 hours of training that began with a brief discussion of the training transfer problem and its causes. Participants then completed a series of questionnaires at various intervals to measure: (a) locus of control, (b) work environment support for training transfer, (c) motivation to transfer, (d) training reactions, (e) mastery of training, and (f) self-report of transfer of training. The participants' immediate supervisors completed the following questionnaires: (a) supervisor evaluation of trainees' use of trained skills, and (b) supervisor assessment of trainees' use of transfer strategies (Tziner et al., 1991).

The results from Tziner's et al.' (1991) research demonstrated that the participants who had received the additional RP module had a higher degree of content mastery and skill transfer strategy utilization than did the participants from the control group. According to supervisors who had observed the participants for several weeks following the training, the RP group also made greater use of the trained skills on the job. Finally, trainees who had an internal locus of control, perceived that they worked in a supportive environment, and had received the RP training module had the highest rates of transfer strategy utilization. The results of this research suggest that the presentation of RP

modules near the end of any skill-based training event might serve to improve both knowledge acquisition and posttraining application of skills.

Burke

Burke (1997) further studied the effect of RP training as a means to maintain learned behaviors. Her model proposed that RP training has the potential to affect outcomes in five areas: (a) motivation to transfer, (b) ability to transfer, (c) retention of course knowledge, (d) use of cognitive and behavior transfer strategies, and (e) demonstration of behavioral change. The hypotheses she tested anticipated that RP would significantly affect transfer outcomes and that the use of transfer strategies would increase the degree to which training was transferred following the initial training program.

Burke's (1997) sample was 90 university undergraduates who had recently competed training on the effective use of assertive communication. Participants were randomly assigned to three treatment groups. One group received full RP training, another group received an abbreviated version of RP training, and the control group received no RP training at all. Immediately following training, participants were surveyed to measure (a) motivation to transfer, (b) ability to transfer, (c) reactions to the original training program, and (d) reactions to the RP training. Participants were surveyed again 3 weeks after the original survey to measure (a) retention of course content, (b) use of transfer strategies, (c) use of trained skills, (d) self-monitoring behavior, and (e) general cognitive ability.

The findings of Burke's (1997) study suggested that use of RP training and behavioral strategies increased the maintenance of learned knowledge and skills, but

surprisingly, this improvement was limited to ability to transfer and did not significantly enhance training transfer. The unexpected finding of the research was the group that did not receive the RP training had the highest motivation to transfer. Although the researcher argued for more study in this area to explore these surprising results, she speculated that the reasons for them might include training fatigue on the part of the RP group or perhaps a sense of anxiety was created within the RP group because of the focus on high-risk situations that might lead to relapse or transfer failure. In conclusion, the researcher suggested that more research was necessary before clear conclusions could be made regarding the efficacy of RP training as a means of increasing training transfer.

Evaluation

The four-level evaluation model first introduced by Donald L. Kirkpatrick in 1959 remains the gold standard for evaluation today (Allen, 2007). Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2005) contend that despite the myriad reasons for evaluating training programs, the four-level model is still vibrant and relevant. More recently, other experts such as Phillips (1996, 1997) and Mooney and Brinkerhoff (2008) have offered additional perspectives on the topic. A brief summary of each of the levels and the more recent views is offered below.

Level 1: Reaction

The first and most basic level of evaluation in Kirkpatrick's (1967, 1996a, 1996b, 2008) model is customer reaction. It is summarized in the questions, "How do trainees react to the program, or better, what is the measure of customer satisfaction?" (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005, p. 5) and should be done for every program. It lets program participants voice their opinions immediately, and provides instructors and

program managers with immediate feedback that can be used to guide improvements. Although it is an important and necessary tool familiar to most learning professionals, the reaction sheet does not measure learning. To understand whether learning has occurred, the next level of evaluation is necessary.

Level 2: Learning

Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2005) outline the three types of learning that occur in a training program: (a) a new or increased understanding of concepts, principles, or techniques; (b) the development or refinement of skills; and (c) changed attitudes. Therefore, the second level of evaluation answers the question, "To what extent has learning occurred?" (p. 5) and is necessary to understanding whether the objectives of the program are being met.

Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2005) argue that knowledge and attitudes should be measured with a written test before and after training, while skill acquisition or improvement can only be determined by observing performance. By measuring the change in pre- and posttest performance, instructors can determine their level of success (Kirkpatrick, 2008). While learning is clearly a desired outcome of all training programs, learning only brings value in an organizational setting when it is applied. The next level in the model serves to evaluate behavior change.

Level 3: Behavior

The third level of evaluation is much more complicated than the first two because it attempts to answer the question, "What change in job behavior occurred because people attended a training program?" (Kirkpatrick, 2008, p. 488). Brinkerhoff and Mooney (2008) take the view that level-3 evaluation is the most important and productive of the

levels, based on their understanding of the basic logic of training. In this logic, an employee lacks a particular skill, area of knowledge, or attitude (SKA) necessary to do the job, so the employee participates in a training intervention to address his or her deficiency. If the employee uses the newly acquired SKA effectively in the workplace, performance improves and he or she adds value to the organization. Behavior change is at the heart of this present study.

A level 3 evaluation is accomplished by determining what participants are doing differently in the work place than they were doing before the program (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005). It is often not possible to do the evaluation immediately following the training because participants must be given some time to practice and apply the behavior on a sustained basis. In order to determine whether behavior has changed as a result of participating in the training program, surveys or interviews are conducted with the person who completed the training, that person's boss or bosses, subordinates (if any), peers, and anyone else who might have had the opportunity to observe the trainee's behavior.

Level 4: Results

It is certainly reasonable for organizational leaders to expect that their investment in training is yielding positive results. Kirkpatrick's (1967, 1996a, 1996b, 2008) fourth level of evaluation is focused on measuring these results. These results could include a number of factors, including a reduction in employee turnover, increased quality, increased sales, reduced scrap, improved efficiency, etc. (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005).

Kirkpatrick (1996a) notes that it is relatively easy to determine results for some training programs. For example, results for a program designed to teach safe driving

techniques could be determined by measuring the number of accidents before and after the program. In other situations, it might be more difficult to isolate the variables that affect the result. For example sales might decline after the completion of a company-wide selling skills initiative if the economy goes into a major recession. Therefore, in some situations, it is difficult to link results directly to a particular training intervention.

Level 5: Return on Investment (ROI)

P. P. Phillips and J. J. Phillips (2007) have updated Kirkpatrick's (1967, 1996a, 1996b, 2008) model by adding a fifth level of evaluation, ROI, in which "business impact data collected in the evaluation are converted to monetary values and compared to program costs" (P. P. Phillips & J. J. Phillips, 2007, p. 25). Phillips (2008) argues that this monetary measure of the results delivered by training is a better representation of training's true value and allows for an organization's limited resources to be invested in programs that produce the greatest return. Measuring ROI requires the analysis and measurement of six types of data collected through a variety of means and then follows a process that isolates the effects of the program in monetary terms.

Success Case Method

Going beyond the survey and interview techniques prescribed for level 3 evaluation by Kirkpatrick (1967, 1996a, 1996b, 2008) and Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2005), Mooney and Brinkerhoff (2008) suggest a process of in-depth interviews to determine on-the-job application they call the "Success Case Evaluation Method" (p. 113). The Success Case Method approach works through a three-step process using a series of focused questions defining: (a) whether the training is being used, (b) what good is the training doing when it is used, and (c) how more value could come from the

training. Training evaluators then report the results of their findings to those stakeholders who can take action that leads to meaningful changes in the outcome. The authors note that the action dictated by the Success Case Method must often be taken by managers outside of the training function.

Summary

The literature presented in this chapter provides strong evidence that the supervisor or frontline manager plays an important role in the training transfer process. Getting involved in the development of training, selecting the right people to participate, discussing expectations with learners before training, and giving employees the opportunity to apply what they learned on the job are all key functions that contribute to training transfer. With this in mind, the compelling questions that must be answered are whether supervisors are doing these things and why. These questions are the essence of this study, which will be fully described in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Methods and Procedures

Overview

This chapter will outline the research methodology used for this phenomenological study. The problem will be restated, the nature of the study will be addressed, and the research design and rational will be presented. The chapter will then discuss the study setting, sample, participants, human subjects concerns, and data collection. Finally, the analytical techniques, including data reduction and analysis, along with the efforts of the researcher to render the findings valid, will be discussed.

Restatement of the Problem

While organizations continue to invest heavily in training (Anthony & Norton, 1991; Bassi & Van Buren, 1999; Chakiris & Rolander, 1986; Paradise, 2008), low transfer threatens this significant expenditure (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Broad & Newstrom, 1992; Georgenson, 1982; Newstrom, 1986; P. P. Phillips & J. J. Phillips, 2007). The literature identifies several factors that influence the degree to which skills, attitudes, and behaviors developed in the classroom are contextualized and sustained in the workplace (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001; Yamnill & McLean, 2001). From this increasing body of knowledge, researchers have learned that supervisors play a significant role as facilitators of learning transfer (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Brinkerhoff & Montesino, 1995; Clarke, 2002; Gregoire et al., 1998; Huczynski & Lewis, 1980; Quiñones et al., 1995; Richman-Hirsch, 2001; Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001; Smith-Jentsch et al., 2001). Yet despite this evidence, there is little research to help us understand the degree to which supervisors are facilitating training transfer and what factors exist that might promote or limit involvement with this process.

Restatement of the Research Question

The primary research question in this study was: What are the lived experiences of supervisors as they endeavor to facilitate training transfer for their direct reports within one pharmaceutical sales organization?

Nature of the Study

The goal of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of supervisors in a large, research-based pharmaceutical company as they endeavor to facilitate training transfer with their direct reports. The study used in-depth interviews (Seidman, 2006) with first- and second-line sales managers, also known as district managers and regional sales directors, with the aim of grasping the essence of their experiences.

Research Design and Rationale

A qualitative research method was used for a number of reasons. First, little or no research exists on what supervisors are doing in an uncontrolled environment to enhance the transfer of training with their direct reports. By using a phenomenological approach, this research attempted to "understand several individuals' common experiences" (Creswell, 2007, p. 60) as they interact with their direct reports in support of training transfer. A further goal of the research was to reveal any factors that affect these interactions and to understand meaning ascribed to these factors by the supervisors studied. This sort of data can best be obtained through the type of in-depth discussions possible in phenomenological studies.

The study participants' perception of their lived experience is ultimately subjective. As a result, the phenomenological approach is an "interpretive, rather than an

objective, mode of description" (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 48) and the means by which the researcher "understands the meaning of the phenomena" (p. 170). Seidman (2006) further supports this view by noting, "Social abstractions…are best understood through the experiences of the individuals…and lives are the stuff upon which the abstractions are built" (p. 10). With this in mind, it was clear that obtaining data through interviews was the most productive way of pursuing this topic; however, meaningful conclusions resulted because the data obtained were appropriately obtained, analyzed, and interpreted.

Setting, Sample, and Participants

Description of the Setting

The study was conducted by interviewing district managers and regional sales directors, in field locations across the United States, who supervise sales professionals in a large, research-based pharmaceutical company. By definition, district managers and regional sales directors have direct reports who frequently attend training events. District managers generally have between 8 and 12 direct reports, while regional sales directors often manage teams of as many as 120 representatives and district managers.

The pharmaceutical industry and the sales arena in particular were chosen for the setting of the study for several reasons. First, focusing on one industry, one organization, and one functional area within that organization improves the likelihood that the individuals involved "have all experienced the phenomenon being explored and can articulate their lived experience" (Creswell, 2007, p. 121). Creswell further notes that the more diversity among individual participants, "the more challenging it will be for the researcher to find common experiences, themes, and the overall essence of the experience for all participants" (Creswell, p. 122).

51

With this in mind, the pharmaceutical industry offered a fitting setting for the study of training transfer because of the emphasis placed on training, particularly for pharmaceutical sales professionals. Because of the sophisticated nature of its customer base—highly educated health care professionals—pharmaceutical sales professionals typically have at least a baccalaureate degree and receive rigorous classroom training to develop and maintain their product knowledge and selling skills. As a result, companies in this industry often invest substantial financial resources in training programs. In short, education, training, and development are highly valued and ongoing in this industry, thus making the topic both highly relevant and readily recalled during interviews.

In addition to the training provided on products and sales techniques, pharmaceutical sales representatives and managers often receive ongoing training to develop emotional competence. Goleman (1998) generally divides these competencies into two categories: personal competence and social competence. The personal competence framework "determines how we manage ourselves" (p. 26) and includes "self awareness…self-regulation…and motivation" (p. 26). Social competencies "determine how we handle relationships" (p. 27). These include an awareness of others or empathy and a series of social skills that allow one to work well with others. Although Goleman suggests these emotional competencies are "becoming increasingly essential for excellence in every job and in every part of the world" (p. 29), they have long been a crucial skill set for professional salespeople. It is for that reason that pharmaceutical training organizations invest heavily in training programs that enhance these competencies.

The company in which the study was conducted is a large research-based pharmaceutical company located in North America. The company generates in excess of $5 billion in annual sales, has more than 5,000 employees, and has a field-based sales force of more than 3,000 employees. Approximately 450 of these field-based sales professionals are managers with direct reports. These managers generally range in age from 30 to 50 years, have worked for the company for at least 5 years, and all hold at least a baccalaureate degree from an accredited university. All first-line managers, known as district managers, work out of their homes and spend at least 3 days per week interacting with customers and coaching their representatives in the field. Second-line managers are regional sales directors who work out of regionally based offices around the country that manage several districts. A typical district manager or regional sales director has had direct reports who received training in a classroom setting within the last 12 months.

The researcher chose the particular company to study based on his access to sites and rapport with potential study participants. Similarly, the researcher has some familiarity with many of the company's training programs. For example, all new representatives undergo several weeks of initial training before they are allowed to interact with customers. Similarly, all new district managers complete 3 weeks of classroom-based training, usually within 90 days of their appointment. Both representatives and managers then complete follow-up or advanced training throughout their careers, with most going through at least 1 day of instructor-led training each year. The amount of training varies based on individual and organizational needs, but new product launches and new indications for existing products always mandate increased

training. Current policy also requires managers to complete professional development courses each year, most of which are instructor led and are held during special training emphasis weeks.

As a program manager within the training function with responsibilities for developing leadership and management training programs, the researcher was able to access managers from across the country for in-depth discussions about training transfer practices. The researcher was also aware of the training programs and cycles currently existing within the organization and used that knowledge to create deeper understanding and more targeted questions. Further, as an employee of the organization, the researcher had ready access to company facilities, information, and was not subject to limitations raised by security concerns. This allowed research to take place in a natural setting and allowed the researcher to be "highly involved in actual experiences of the participants" (Creswell, 2003, p. 181).

The researcher's easy access and familiarity with the study setting also created potential pitfalls. Creswell (2003) warns that the researchers "biases, values, and interests" (p. 182) might shape the study and must be acknowledged. With this in mind, the researcher's role, to include past experiences with the study setting and participants, and the strategies of validity used, are reported. The researcher "set aside [his] experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (Creswell, 2007, p. 59) through the use of bracketing. Although this was difficult and rarely a flawless process, the researcher attempted to present the findings from a fresh perspective and without preconceived notions, and fully disclosed

previous experiences that might bias his point of view. A statement of researcher bias is presented in Appendix A.

Sampling Methods

As is the case with most qualitative research, study participants were purposefully selected based on their characteristics and ability to provide insight on the problem at hand (Creswell, 2003; Richards & Morse, 2007). Creswell (2007) further recommends in-depth interviews with individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. In order to make a determination as to who has experienced the necessary phenomena, the researcher used a criterion sampling process and determined the suitability of study participants based on inclusion criteria.

The researcher engaged study participants based on their ability to meet certain criteria. The inclusion criteria used were: (a) Currently employed by the subject pharmaceutical company, (b) Currently serving as a district or regional sales manager, (c) Has had a direct report attend classroom-based training events within the last year, (d) Has attended a classroom-based training event in the last year, and (e) Willing to allow an audio recording to be made of the interview. By definition, district managers and regional sales directors in the studied pharmaceutical sales organization are supervisors and will likely have experienced the phenomenon under investigation. In addition, the researcher made efforts to include approximately equal numbers of male and female participants, representatives from different regions of the country, different parts of the sales organization, and different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Ultimately, the main requirement was that all participants "have experience in the phenomenon being studied" (Creswell, 2007, p. 128).

Sample Size

According to Creswell (2007), a general principle in qualitative research is to study a few individuals in detail in order to "elucidate the particular" (p. 126). However, the practical question became how many participants are necessary to allow the researcher to "reduce [accurately] individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence" (p. 58). Seidman (2006) addresses this issue with two criteria: sufficiency and saturation.

Addressing the criterion of sufficiency, Seidman (2006) encourages the researcher to ask the question, "Are there sufficient numbers to reflect the range of participants and sites that make up the population so that others outside the sample might have a chance to connect to the experience of those in it?" (p. 55). The answer to this question in the context of this study required the inclusion of men, women, and minority managers; managers with different levels of experience; managers representing different sales forces within the broader sales function; and managers from different areas of the country. Although Polkinghorne (1989) recommends that 5 to 25 individuals be interviewed, it is interesting to note that Seidman does not prescribe a particular number to create a sufficient sample.

Seidman (2006) does offer another criterion, saturation, as an additional guide. Saturation occurs when the researcher begins to hear the same information repeated with little new information being revealed. Because it is impossible to predict when saturation will occur, it is difficult to predetermine an appropriate number of study participants. Seidman concludes that the interviewer could have enough information when "he or she

is not learning anything decidedly new and that the process of interviewing itself is becoming laborious rather than pleasurable" (p. 56).

McMillan and Schumacher (2006) assert the size of the sample to be less important than "the richness of the cases and the analytical capabilities of the researcher" (p. 12), yet they also provide several relevant guidelines to be considered. The purpose of the study, focus of the study, availability of participants, and the potential for redundancy in the data are all issues that were considered when determining sample size. There were also practical concerns that were weighed. Seidman (2006) recognizes that "practical exigencies of time, money, and other resources also play a role, especially in doctoral research" (p. 55). All of these matters were relevant for this study.

Therefore, after careful consideration of all of the issues involved, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 14 participants. By conducting 14 interviews, the research captured a range of supervisors in the subject pharmaceutical sales organization by including both men and women managers, managers with different levels of experience, and managers from different parts of the country, although "issues of representativeness are less important in qualitative research than they are in quantitative research" (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 497). Since the data collection strategy was in-depth interviews, the relatively small sample size yielded sufficient data for analysis and reduced the potential for redundancy. It was also possible to identify and locate 14 willing participants meeting the criteria within a short period of time; thus allowing the research to proceed without delay.

The sample size was also within the range recommended for phenomenological research by several prominent authors in the field. McMillan and Schumacher (2006)

point out that the number of purposeful samples can range from 1 to 40 or more. Dukes (as cited in Creswell, 2007) recommends studying 3 to 10 subjects and Riemen (as cited in Creswell, 2007) focused on only 10 participants. Creswell summarizes his exposure to a wide range of sample sizes in phenomenological research by recalling published studies with 1 to 325 subjects. Finally, Moustakas (1994) avoids the topic of numbers altogether by encouraging flexibility. He notes, "Each research project holds its own integrity and establishes its own methods and procedures to facilitate the flow of the investigation and the collection of data" (p. 104).

Human Subjects

As Moustakas (1994) notes, "Human science researchers are guided by the ethical principles on research with human participants" (p. 109). Therefore, all interactions with human subjects were in accordance with Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology's policies and procedures. Only after approval from Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board did the research commence. The researcher made every effort to protect the rights, welfare, and human dignity of all subjects involved with this research.

The researcher gained the written permission of all study participants. Among other information, the consent form included the following information: the purpose of the study, the participants' right to leave the study at will, and the efforts taken to protect the confidentiality of study participants (Creswell, 2007). Participants were encouraged to ask questions at any time during the process and no data were collected prior to the participant signing the consent form illustrated in Appendix B.

Most important, participation in the study was completely voluntary. As Seidman (2006) notes, "The most fundamental right of the potential participant is not to participate" (p. 65). Similarly, participants who began an interview were told that they could choose to end the interview if they become uncomfortable with any of the questions. Finally, there were no negative consequences associated with choosing to decline participation in the research. All of these rights were clearly communicated to potential study participants through the consent form previously described and verbally reinforced by the researcher.

From the outset of the research through publication, the identities of all study participants remained confidential. The researcher used pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants and took necessary steps to protect the identity of the organization that employs the participants (Creswell, 2007; Seidman, 2006). All of the steps taken to protect the privacy of study participants were outlined in the written consent form (Seidman, 2006).

Permission was also obtained from appropriate leaders within the host organization prior to the start of the research. The researcher contacted the directors of Continuing Education, Human Resources, Office of Ethics and Compliance, Corporate Communications, and the Associate General Counsel to receive their approval prior to initiating contact with study participants. Since the organization had no formal process or internal review board for such projects, the researcher gained the approval informally via personal conversations or e-mail.

Procedures

The researcher conducted one individual, face-to-face interview of approximately 1 hour with each study participant. However, prior to the face-to-face interview, there was a brief initial screening interview lasting about 5 minutes to determine whether candidates met inclusion criteria. The procedures the researcher used to conduct these interviews are presented in this section.

The researcher chose study participants using a purposeful sampling strategy. "This means that the inquirer selects individuals for study…because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). With that in mind, the researcher contacted approximately 20 district and regional sales directors from across the organization via e-mail and invited them to participate in a brief screening interview. The e-mail message briefly outlined the nature of the study, described the phenomenon to be considered, and invited interested parties to respond and suggest a time for a brief 5- to 10-minute telephonic screening interview. The text of this e-mail message is presented in Appendix C.

Initial Screening Interview

The initial screening interview was conducted via telephone because all of the potential study participants are in the field and rarely come into regional or corporate office sites. The purpose of the initial screening interview was to establish rapport, explain the purpose of the study, pose appropriate screening questions, and to ask whether the candidate would like to participate in the study by meeting for an in-depth, face-to-face interview. The researcher emphasized that participation in the study was

voluntary, that there was little or no risk or discomfort associated with participation, and that the outcome of the study might yield new insights that will inform future practice. The researcher described the process of informed consent and the necessity of the participant to sign the appropriate informed consent form. The researcher read the inclusion questions and solicited verbal responses from the candidates. If the candidate met the criteria, the researcher closed the screening interview by asking whether the candidate was willing to participate in the study without remuneration and allow an audio recording to be made of the future interview. If the answer was affirmative, an in-depth interview was scheduled. The screening questionnaire that was used is attached at Appendix D.

Interview Protocol

In-depth, one-on-one interviews were the primary instruments of this phenomenological study and the primary means by which data were collected (Creswell, 2007). The phenomenological interview, as described by Moustakas (1994), "involves an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended comments and questions" (p. 114) and is designed to allow the researcher to understand the meaning the participant ascribes to the experience under consideration (Seidman, 2006). Although the researcher developed an interview guide to keep the interview on track, the setting was informal and conversational, with every effort made by the interviewer to make the study participant feel comfortable (Moustakas, 1994). The interviews occurred most often in coffee shops or hotel lobbies, unless the participant stated a preference to meet in a company office or conference room as a matter of convenience. Every attempt was made to find places to conduct the interviews that were quiet and free from distractions (Creswell, 2007).

A predetermined list of questions served to guide the discovery process, but did not always provide access to all potential avenues of study. Since the ultimate interest of the phenomenological interviewer is to understand the meaning of the lived experience under investigation, the researcher remained flexible and offered additional questions when there was a need for clarification or there seemed to be an opportunity for additional inquiry (Richards & Morse, 2007). A list of the basic questions to be used during the in-depth interview, along with clarifying and probing questions, is included as Appendix E.

The questions used in the interview were reviewed by a panel of experts to ensure their appropriateness for gathering information relative to this research. These experts were selected based on their academic credentials or their experience in the field of learning and development. Background information on the expert panel is included in Appendix F.

By drawing upon the expertise of experienced practitioners, the researcher ensured that his general interview guide addressed key issues and was designed to evoke "rich, vital, [and] substantive descriptions of the co-researcher's experience of the phenomenon" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116). In other words, the purpose of these consultations was to gain insight from experts in the field in order to improve the quality of the interviews and ensured that the guide was designed to yield the greatest possible insight into the phenomenon.

To gain this important feedback, the primary researcher e-mailed the interview guide to members of the panel with a request for a face-to-face or telephonic appointment with each member individually to receive his or her verbal feedback and

recommendations for improvement. Expert panel members were asked to comment on whether the questions adequately covered the subject, whether the questions explored the phenomenon effectively, and whether any of the questions appeared to be leading or inappropriate. The researcher then reviewed the feedback and modified the interview guide accordingly prior to beginning data collection. The feedback from the expert panelists was all fairly consistent, so there was no need to make decisions about what feedback to incorporate into the interview guide. All feedback was used to improve the quality of the interviews.

As a further means of insuring the validity and usefulness of the interview guide, the researcher conducted cognitive interviews with two supervisors from the organization who were not participants in the study. Specifically, the researcher presented the interview guide to each of these managers individually and asked them to offer verbal commentary on each of the items to determine clarity of the statements, potential ambiguities, and the accuracy of the terms used (Desimone & Carlson-Le Floch, 2004). The researcher took notes and asked clarifying questions throughout the conversations, but there were no major issues raised by the supervisors, so no changes were made to the guide.

At the outset of each in-depth interview, the researcher acknowledged his previous experiences with the organization, particular training activities, and the person being interviewed. This was done both through a self-reflective exercise on the part of the researcher and also expressed verbally to the study participant in rapport-building opening remarks. Moustakas (1994) refers to this process of setting aside previous

perspectives to focus on the topic at hand in a fresh way as "bracketing" (p. 97), and considers it an essential element of the phenomenological approach.

Recording and Transcribing the Interviews

Because "qualitative researchers are frequently interested not just in *what* people say but also in the *way* that they say it" (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 489), the researcher used a digital recording device to make audio recordings of all in-depth interviews and study participants agreed to be recorded. At the completion of the interview, a transcription of the exchange was created using the digital recording with this complete account used as the basis for analysis. According to Heritage (1984), the use of a recording device when conducting qualitative research offers several advantages:

1. The use of a recording device helps to correct the natural limitations of memory and allows for careful examination of what was said at a later time.

2. It allows the interviewer to remain focused on what is being said and not overly concerned with taking notes. This focus allows the interviewer to address interesting points, ask appropriate follow-up questions, and more fully engage in the conversation with the study participant.

3. An audio recording and transcript create a permanent record that can be carefully examined and organized for ease of use.

4. The data becomes available for scrutiny by other researchers who can conduct secondary analysis to determine whether the original work was biased.

5. "It allows the original data to be reused in other ways from those intended by the original researcher—for example, in the light of new theoretical ideas or analytic strategies" (p. 489).

Seidman (2006) confirms his belief in the importance of recording and transcribing interviews by noting, "The participants' thoughts become embodied in their words. To substitute the researcher's paraphrasing or summaries of what the participants say for their actual words is to substitute the researcher's consciousness for that of the participant" (p. 114). In addition to the advantages previously noted, Seidman suggests that having audio files of the interviews allows the researcher to study and improve his technique for future interviews. The creation of audio files to which participants have access also provides additional assurances that "their words will be treated responsibly" (p. 114). Overall, there are a number of compelling reasons to make recordings of interviews.

Nevertheless, there are costs associated with recording and transcribing interviews. In addition to the financial costs associated with acquiring the necessary equipment and the substantial investment in time necessary to transcribe the interviews, Bryman and Bell (2007) suggest, "The use of a tape recorder may disconcert respondents, who become self-conscious or alarmed at the prospect of their words being preserved" (p. 490). However, Seidman's (2006) experience is that most participants soon forget the device is even there and, therefore, the potential for inhibition is low.

There is also potential for equipment failure or malfunction. To mitigate the potential for problems, the researcher tested the recording device prior to each interview to ensure that it was functioning properly and positioned correctly to capture clearly the words of the interviewee. A backup device was also available in case the primary device failed.

The researcher engaged the services of a trained professional to transcribe the digital audio files into text. While there was a substantial cost associated with professional transcription, the researcher did not have the time or skill to do the work personally. Using the services of a professional in this field improved the accuracy of the data and allowed for the research to be completed in a timelier manner.

To protect the confidentiality of the study participants, the transcriptions referenced participants by their initials and a coded identifier only. This makes it impossible for any reader, other than the researcher, to identify study participants (Seidman, 2006). Once the data were gathered, studied, and organized, further analysis could begin.

Analytical Techniques

Although it is impossible to understand fully another person (Seidman, 2006), there are proven analytical techniques that allow qualitative researchers to address the challenge of analyzing the data collected through in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). The analysis of phenomenological data involves "a process of reading, reflection, and writing and rewriting that enables the researcher to transform the lived experience into textural expression of its essence" (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 171). It is important to note that this is an inductive, rather than deductive process and the researcher came to the transcripts with an open attitude. In other words, "The researcher cannot address the material with a set of hypotheses to test or with a theory developed in another context to which he or she wishes to match the data" (Seidman, p. 117).

With that in mind, this researcher adapted Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1973), and Keen (1975) method of analysis of

phenomenological data using the following steps:

1. In order to direct the focus of the study to the participants' experiences, the researcher again acknowledged and described any personal experiences with the phenomena under consideration, such as his employment status with the company being studied and his familiarity with particular training programs. Richards and Morse (2007) refer to this idea as "bracketing previous knowledge—that is, placing it aside" (p. 170). The goal of this bracketing process is to allow the researcher to engage the phenomenon "freshly and describe it precisely as it is perceived" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 237).

2. After reading the transcripts of the interviews "to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning" (Creswell, 2003, p. 191), the researcher made a list of significant statements or direct quotations that revealed the lived experiences of the managers participating in the study. Creswell (2007) refers to the creation of this list of "significant…non-repetitive, non-overlapping statements" (p. 159) as "horizonalization" (p. 159), based on Moustakas' (1994) description of these nonrepetitive statements as the "invariant horizons or meaning units of the experience" (p. 122). Marshall (1981) affirms that there is an element of personal judgment involved in this winnowing process, but suggests that with a careful reading of the interview texts, researchers can readily identify meaningful portions. Seidman (2006) encourages researchers not to agonize over what to mark in the transcripts; instead suggesting readers "err on the side of inclusion" (p.

118) and trust their judgment. Following this guidance, this researcher marked and listed statements from the transcripts that seemed meaningful to him.

3. The researcher then grouped these significant statements into themes to develop "clusters of meaning" (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). The process of creating these themes or clusters of meaning involved the word processing software's cut and paste function to extract the meaning units and sort them into categories based on how the statements related to the others. The categories or themes were altered or reduced through the researcher's continued analysis and reflection. Creswell (2003) recommends five to seven categories for a research study.

4. The researcher then used the themes, along with verbatim examples, to "write a description of 'what' the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon. This is called a 'textural description' of the experience" (Creswell, 2007, p. 159) and involves the use of descriptive language and quotations from the interview transcripts. In this study, the textural descriptions of the experience involved what the study participants did to promote training transfer among their direct reports.

5. After creating the textural description of the experience, the researcher then worked to develop a "structural description" (Creswell, 2007, p. 159) of how the phenomena was experienced, including the time, place, and overall setting. Creswell (2003) refers to this and the previous step as a "detailed rendering of information about people, places, or events in a setting" (p. 193). In the context of this study, the structural description included the time, place, and

situations in which supervisors endeavored to promote training transfer and addressed some of the environmental factors that affected their efforts.

6. The final step in the analysis was for the researcher to "write a composite description of the phenomena incorporating both the textural and structural descriptions" (Creswell, 2007, p. 159). The goal of this composite was "integrating all individual textural-structural descriptions into a universal description of the experience representing the group as a whole" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122). This composite description of the phenomena was the basis for qualitative narrative that is presented in Chapter 4 of this study.

The purpose of the interviews and the subsequent analysis was to answer the research question. The process described did this by revealing the experiences of the sales managers interviewed and uncovering the qualitative factors in their behavior (Moustakas, 1994) that contribute to or inhibit training transfer among their direct reports. As a result, illuminating the phenomena by creating an accurate description of the group's overall experience contributes to a greater understanding of the lived experiences of these supervisors and might guide the actions of stakeholders who desire to increase training transfer in business settings. However, the full value of this research can only be achieved if it is trustworthy.

Trustworthiness

If the conclusions drawn from the study are to be useful for either theorists or practitioners, the research must be valid. According to Creswell's (2007) interpretation of Polkinghorne, "Validation refers to the notion that an idea is well grounded and well supported" (p. 215). In qualitative research, validity does not mean that the data must be

generalizable to a broader population (Creswell, 2003). Instead, Seidman (2006) writes:

> The researcher's task is to present the experience of the people he or she interviews in compelling enough detail and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects. (p. 51)

The researcher used several strategies to validate his findings.

The researcher used "rich, thick descriptions to convey the findings" (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). This means that the researcher worked to offer vivid descriptions of settings in an effort to help readers identify with the milieu of the study participants. This step was particularly important, as many readers might be unfamiliar with the setting of a field-based sales operation and the relatively limited face-to-face contact supervisors have with their direct reports.

The researcher also "actively search[ed] for discrepant and negative evidence that will modify or refute a pattern" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 374) because "discussing contrary information adds to the credibility of an account for the reader" (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). Thus, if participants described lived experiences that deviated from an emerging pattern, their experiences were carefully noted and discussed. In other words, more than one pattern of evidence was considered and presented.

The researcher also clearly identified the bias that he brought to the study (Creswell, 2003). Although the researcher strived for "Epoche…a new way of looking at things, a way that requires that we learn to see what stands before our eyes, what we can distinguish and describe" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33), his experiences and preconceived notions were ever present and had to be presented honestly.

70

Validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research and determines "whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account" (Creswell, 2003, p. 195). The researcher made every reasonable effort to ensure that the results presented are trustworthy and accurately represent the experiences of study participants. These findings are presented in a qualitative narrative in Chapter 4 of this study.

Summary

This chapter presented the methods the researcher used to conduct the study. It began with a restatement of the problem and an overview of the qualitative nature of the study. This was followed by a specific outline of the study design, the means by which data was collected and analyzed, and how the human subjects were engaged and treated. Chapter 4 will present the findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the lived experiences of supervisors as they endeavor to facilitate training transfer for their direct reports within one pharmaceutical sales organization. This chapter presents the findings of this research and is based on in-depth interviews conducted with 14 district managers and regional sales directors who described the phenomenon. This chapter begins with a description of the sample, followed by a review of how the data was collected and analyzed, and concludes with a presentation of the findings.

Description of the Sample

The researcher interviewed 14 district managers and regional sales directors in a large, research-based pharmaceutical company to obtain data. All participants met the basic inclusion criteria: (a) Currently employed by the subject pharmaceutical company, (b) Currently serving as a district manager or regional sales director, (c) Had a direct report attend classroom-based training events within the last year, (d) Attended a classroom-based training event in the last year, and (e) Were willing to allow an audio recording to be made of the interview. The researcher carefully briefed all study participants on the nature of their involvement in the research and all participants signed a statement of informed consent to verify their understanding.

The researcher purposefully selected participants to create a diverse mix of district managers and regional sales directors. Of the 14 supervisors interviewed, 7 were district managers and 7 were regional sales directors; 7 were men and 7 were women; 9 were Caucasian, 2 were African American, 2 were Asian American, and 1 was Hispanic.

The tenure of the district managers and regional sales directors varied widely as well. The most junior district manager had only 6 months in her position at the time of the interview and the most senior district manager had 10 years in his role. The tenure of regional sales directors ranged from 1 year to 10 years. All participants were assigned fictional names to conceal their true identities. Statements made by study participants are attributed to these fictional names throughout the remainder of this study.

Data Collection

Prior to having any interaction with potential study participants or collecting data, the researcher received the approval of Pepperdine University Graduate Schools' Institutional Review Board. Once approval was received, the researcher followed the established study protocol strictly and made every effort to protect the rights, welfare, and human dignity of everyone involved in the research. All potential study participants were thoroughly briefed on the nature of the research, the reasons they were being asked to participate, and the time commitment they were being asked to make.

The researcher chose study participants using a purposeful sampling strategy (Creswell, 2007). This approach allowed the researcher to contact potential participants who he thought had experienced and could provide insight on the phenomena under consideration; were diverse in terms of tenure, geography, race, ethnicity, and gender; and were reasonably available to the researcher within the 4-week time frame during which data were collected.

All of the potential participants contacted met the basic study inclusion criteria. While the majority expressed a willingness to participate, a few of the managers complained of busy schedules and an inability to coordinate their schedules with the

schedule of the interviewer. In the instances in which the scheduling challenges could not be overcome, the researcher thanked the potential participant for his or her consideration and suggested that it would probably be best if he looked to others who might be more available.

A complicating factor that made the scheduling of interviews even more difficult was that the company was also launching two new products during the same general time period in which the data collection was taking place. During the first few weeks of a new pharmaceutical product's introduction to the market, the operational tempo in the commercial organization is accelerated and all sales personnel—representatives, managers, and executives—are asked to spend additional time with customers in selling situations. This mandate limits managers' ability to accept discretionary appointments and forces them to prioritize their activities carefully.

Another factor that affected the availability of managers was the timing of the annual performance review process. In this particular company, managers are required to write and deliver annual performance appraisals for all of their direct reports during the months of March and April. This performance management process creates additional demands on managers' time, thereby making it even more difficult to participate in nonwork-related academic research. In an effort to accommodate study participants, the researcher met with some managers during the lunch hour and at the conclusion of the work day.

The interviews occurred in a variety of settings. In each case, the researcher encouraged the study participant to select a meeting location that would be convenient and comfortable, but would be relatively quiet and free from distractions. For 7 of the 14

interviews, the participants suggested that the meetings take place in office space owned or leased by the company—typically the participant's workplace—as a matter of convenience. In most of these cases, the interview took place in an individual's office or a nearby conference room. The other meetings took place in a public setting such as a coffee shop or restaurant. In the cases in which the interview took place in an establishment that served food or drinks, the researcher always offered to buy coffee, a soft drink, or lunch for the study participant.

At the outset of each interview, the researcher thanked the participant for his or her time and willingness to take part in the study. At that point, the researcher used a slightly different approach based on whether he had any previous professional interactions with study participants or whether he was meeting the participant for the first time. For the participants with whom he had a previous relationship, the researcher was cordial and conversational, but suggested that both the researcher and participant set aside their existing relationship or previous professional interactions and focus on the present conversation with a fresh perspective. In the instances in which no previous relationship existed, the researcher's bracketing efforts were straightforward and businesslike. After introducing himself, the researcher described the nature of the study, encouraged honesty, emphasized that the identities of study participants would be protected, and reiterated that the researcher was functioning presently in the role of a doctoral candidate conducting scholarly research. All of the study participants responded favorably to these approaches and appeared to answer questions freely and comprehensively.

The researcher used the interview guide presented in Appendix E to steer the interview. Prior to the first interview, the guide was reviewed by a panel of experts (Appendix F) that provided suggestions for improvement on a previous version. The feedback from the panel was similar and related to the consistent use of terms, the need to use open-ended questions, and an encouragement to invite participants to think about a particular instance or person as a way to generate thoughts. Since there was no disagreement among the experts, the researcher incorporated their recommendations as a means of improving the interview guide. The updated guide was then reviewed by two managers who were not participating in the study. These managers described verbally their understanding of each question. The researcher found their understanding to be consistent with his intent and, therefore, made no further changes to the interview guide.

In most cases, all of the interview guide questions (Appendix E) were asked or paraphrased during each interview. Exceptions to this occurred whenever a participant offered a response to one question or made comments during the course of discussion that addressed another question in the interview guide. In other words, the researcher did not read robotically each question verbatim from the guide, but addressed conversationally the questions and did not repeat questions that had already been answered by the participant's previous remarks. By using this approach, the researcher maintained a conversational tone, avoided redundancy, and kept the interviews on schedule.

Transcripts

Each interview was professionally transcribed by Southern California Transcription Services in La Mesa, California. The researcher read and reviewed each transcript while listening to the audio recording to ensure the accuracy for all 14

transcriptions. After verifying the accuracy of each transcript, the researcher read and reread each transcript, making notes on developing patterns, key words, questions, and emerging themes. The transcripts were the basis for all data analysis.

Data Analysis

The data gathered through in-depth interviews with 14 managers in the subject pharmaceutical sales organization were analyzed using the techniques described in Chapter 3 of this study. At the outset the analytical process, as well as at the outset of each interview, the researcher acknowledged his previous experiences with the study participants and his professional role in the company. He also encouraged the participants to try not to think of the researcher as an employee of the company or a colleague, but as a doctoral candidate conducting independent research. The researcher reinforced this point by assuring participants that their identities would remain confidential through the assignment of fictitious names and as a result, they could speak freely without fear of reprisal.

The goal of "bracketing previous knowledge" (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 170) was to allow for a fresh perspective based on an inductive analysis of the data. This required the researcher to focus on the data purely and set aside any previous experiences or interactions with the participants. Since the researcher had limited interactions with approximately half of the study participants prior to the interview, the process of bracketing was more easily done. For those with whom he had previous workplace interactions, the researcher focused his attention on the transcripts and allowed the words of the interviewee to speak clearly to the topic.

The researcher read the transcript of each interview several times "to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning" (Creswell, 2003, p. 191). After gaining a broad understanding, the researcher used different colored markers to notate what he perceived to be "significant…non-repetitive, non-overlapping statements" (p. 153) and made brief annotations in the margins of the transcript texts to capture his impressions about what had been said in the various sections of the interviews. The researcher then made a list of the most meaningful key statements from the transcripts.

With the list of meaningful statements in hand, the researcher then grouped them into thematic areas to develop "clusters of meaning" (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). The word processing software's cut and paste function was then used to position these statements on separate pages and allowed the researcher to visualize how the statements supported the various emerging themes. After reading the statements several times, considering how they related to other statements that formed the thematic patterns, and identifying the primary message in each theme, the researcher reduced the data to five key findings.

The researcher then used verbatim examples to support the key findings and present a "textural description" (Creswell, 2007, p. 159) relating "what the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon" (p. 159) of the experience. The researcher used some of the descriptive structural elements revealed during the interviews to create a more complete and vivid picture of the phenomena. This included the times, places, and circumstances in which the supervisors endeavored to promote training transfer. These details created the context for the supervisors' remarks. The final step was to integrate the textural and structural elements of the interview content in support of the findings to

create a composite that described the overall experience of the group. The composite experience is presented in the following pages and organized around the five key findings that emerged from the data.

Overview of the Findings

The study produced five major findings:

1. All study participants recognized the need to have pretraining interactions with direct reports, but their approaches to these interactions varied widely.

2. Most study participants reported using a more intentional and structured approach to posttraining interactions; however, there was little consistency in methodology and few clearly defined actions that supported sustained behavioral change as a result of their direct reports' training experience.

3. The majority of study participants reported having little interaction with their direct reports during training events. Study participants who did have interactions with direct reports focused largely on personal expressions of support that had little to do with the content of the training or how newly acquired skills would be applied in the workplace.

4. The majority of study participants indicated that their managers had done little to help them apply what they had learned in company-sponsored training for their jobs. As a result, most study participants were not satisfied with the degree of support they had received and desired more productive interactions with their managers that promoted training transfer.

5. The majority of study participants considered a lack of time and competing priorities to be the primary barriers that kept them from doing more to promote training transfer with their direct reports.

Discussion of the Findings

The approach used in this research was to allow district managers and regional sales directors to share their experiences with the phenomena, thus allowing the researcher to develop inductively an essence description (Moustakas, 1994). A series of illustrative quotations is used to support and illuminate each of the findings. The goal of this discussion is to portray multiple perspectives and allow the participants to speak for themselves.

Finding 1: All study participants (14 of 14) recognized the need to have pretraining interactions with direct reports, but the approaches they used in these interactions varied widely.

All study participants knew that they should have some communication with their direct reports prior to training events. However, other than most of the meetings being informal and semistructured, there was little consistency in how these exchanges were conducted. Some occurred as part of a planned field-travel day, while others were brief telephone calls. Some participants related a clear process with defined goals connected to the training content, while others considered the interaction to be primarily an expression of emotional support. Participants described their mind-sets, approach, and goals in the following ways:

Well, typically once they're enrolled I don't do a lot before they go other than maybe I'll call them and say: Look, I know you're heading out for a couple of

days for this training. Good luck with it. Have a good time. I look forward to talking with you when you get back. See what you learned and if you thought it was a valuable use of your time and resources (Bill, personal communication, March 11, 2009).

First and foremost, [my goal is] to make sure the new hires feel comfortable. It seems like there's a lot of anxiety for new reps and I always thought that way too. So I reached out to them to make sure, you know, are you okay? Did you receive the information you were supposed to have received? How are you feeling? Do you have any questions? I think I was trying to hit the emotional chord.…I still think it's important to take that 5 or 6 minutes to call them and make sure they're fine (Kim, personal communication, March 3, 2009).

I am always thinking, well, what will be the application after the event? And then second to that is, how can the application, if an individual's going, can I apply it to the larger group? So those are the initial things that I tend to think about when I hear about people going to training.…Typically, I try to think in terms of kind of a three-phased approach. The first is upfront, talk about what the training…if I have information on the training, what I have perceived the training to be about, to start to generate some thought on the individual. Then when they enter the training, they may have already had the chance to dialogue and think about whatever the training environment may be (Marty, personal communication, March 11, 2009).

It's helping them define kind of my perspective of what this class is about. What I think they're going to get out of it, what I'd like for them to walk away

with when they focus in on these certain elements in addition to whatever they need.…Prior to, is pretty much, this is why you're having this event, this is what you're going to get out of it, and this is what…through dialogue…here's what I want you to pay attention to or walk away with.…Anything particular you want to focus in on (Andy, personal communication, March 11, 2009)?

It is usually my understanding of the training itself that can help them be better prepared. So just making sure they know the objective and the goals of that training and sometimes even with our role in particular, it's letting them know what's going to take place out in a field capacity while they're gone because I think that is itself can cause some anxiety. So as long as you show [that you are] very supportive of that training event and especially if it's a program that you are comfortable with, you will, what we gain, that strength of knowledge is really good. It will allow you to be more productive and do the job more successfully, so it's time well spent. Don't think about the 5 or 3 days, think of it more long-term of once you get out of it, how you're going to apply that and how that will advance any activity you're doing in the job (Sandra, personal communication, March 10, 2009).

It does trigger a lot of things, as far as one, setting expectations, as far as what the representative can expect in the 3 weeks of initial sales training, and the expectations of what I expect from the representative, as far as participation, as far as getting the most out of this learning experience. And then, that triggers things that hopefully lay a foundation for them to have a good experience (John, personal communication, March 11, 2009).

There might be a couple of interactions, one a couple of weeks out, just in terms of tweaking their mind-set, just to give them some things to think about, maybe some things to prepare for, including lists of questions, unresolved topics, issues, and then maybe the day before so that they can again just tweak their mind-set for better preparation. (Ed, personal communication, March 17, 2009).

I like to hear from them…what their focus and mind-set is; that gives an opportunity to then tailor a method, and usually it's by conference call, tailor a method typically to address whether their responses are positive or negative about the training so I know what their intent is. And then more importantly, then deliver by conference call initially, the objective of the training, what their focus should be in meeting some of the training goals.…Then when I work with them in the field over that 3-week period, we talk about it. So where are you at with your prework? What was easiest? What was the most challenging in completing the process? Where do you feel there was content that was not valuable and why? So I'm constantly asking them questions, while listening more importantly because I need to know as a manager, are they really going to maximize this learning opportunity or do I have to help work on my part to help prepare them (Ann, personal communication, March 24, 2009).

I always talk to them about [how] the training that was designed for [them]. Whether you were solicited or I selected you. Let's go with an open mind. What can we learn from this training? Normally, you'll have some background on the training ahead of time so we can sit down and talk about that. I have my expectations, what I would expect from the trainee, what I would expect from that

83

individual, but also I think it's a two-way street. I'd want to know from my direct reports: If you go to this training, what do you think you can learn from it? Because I truly believe you can always learn from every experience, every training, things that you do on an everyday basis, so I think you have to have that communication to share those expectations on both sides because if you don't address that, then maybe he didn't understand my expectations. What I wanted him to get from the training or maybe his. He wanted something different, he wanted to go to the presentation seminar for a different reason; maybe it's more to get over the jitters of being in front of people, not to really perfect the technique of talking in front of a group (Mandy, personal communication, March 20, 2009).

I will typically ask what the training's purpose and more importantly, I'll ask for what the syllabus is for the training so that I can have an idea of what it is that they're going to be trained on.…So what I'll do is at least have a conversation 2 weeks out.…I'm trying to set an example that we shouldn't be waiting until the last week to figure out what we want to do with this training, but we should think about it at least a couple of weeks out.…My goal is to gauge their mind-set on the training. Are you going because you have to…or are they looking forward to learning something? I don't think these conversations should be done over e-mail or voice mail. My preference is to be live and in person.…My goal is to really get your mind-set on where you are with this training in terms of what you're expecting, but also to gain a better, broader understanding of where you're fitting this training into your daily routine (Pat, personal communication, March 26, 2009).

It was also clear from the data that the managers' pretraining approaches varied based on the nature of the training, the reason their direct report was attending the training, and each manager's level of knowledge regarding the course. Some participants reported that if the course were selected by the employee as a means of personal development, there was a different level of involvement than if the manager had encouraged his or her direct report to pursue particular training to address a skill deficiency. Supervisors also displayed a higher level of involvement before the course if they had selected a direct report to participate in special training that would lead to a leadership role impacting their teams. This is what 3 of the participants said:

> Quite honestly, I don't feel as much ownership for the success of the training in those circumstances specifically if it's something developmental for them that they've opted into or that they've wanted to do. I can't even think of an example off the top of my head, but let's say writing for business proficiency or selling success or something like that. I feel less ownership for the successful outcome of that than I do if it's a brand-new hire that I've hired into the organization that is now going to initial sales training for 3 weeks (Rachel, personal communication, March 13, 2009).

> I guess it depends if the class they are going to go is something I've advised them to consider or if it's a class that they have come to me and said that [they] want me to consider. If it's one that they want me to consider, typically, I try to understand the reasoning that they have behind the interest in the class, what they hope to get out of this from a new perspective standpoint, new knowledge standpoint. If it's a class that I'm looking at, it's typically something

I've identified as either I've participated in in the past and I know the value the

educational offering could bring to that participant or it's something that I've

heard that others have attended and have knowledge of that I've seen marked

improvement.…I would have a better idea of what the experience is going to be

like, what their takeaway is going to be, so I'd probably presell it (Bill, personal

communication, March 11, 2009).

Take for example, in a couple of months, we are going to have

representatives whom we've selected, handpicked so to speak, to go in and be

district trainers. Again this is somebody that I've identified on my own team as a

person that's going to be a conduit to hopefully some of the things that I want to

roll out and some of the corporate initiatives, and already in my mind, I'm

formulating prior to that meeting, sitting down with that representative and

saying: Okay, these are things that you're probably going to cover. These are

additional items that I want you to kind of wrap your arms around…That

investment level is you want them to succeed. You want also, the same token,

pump them up to let them know here's a leadership opportunity that my district

manager's identified and, like I said, pump them up and let them know what my

expectations are of them moving forward as part of their participation in this

training venue (John, personal communication, March 11, 2009).

Participants most often used the telephone to connect informally with their direct

reports several days prior to training events. The most common reason given for this was

the distances involved between the supervisor and his or her direct reports in a field-

based sales organization. For example, Andy said, "They're all remote, so it's typically

phone…about a week prior to" (personal communication, March 11, 2009). Some participants noted that their pretraining interactions occur in conjunction with other business interactions. The following comments also support this theme:

> I think probably in fairness and the work that I do, most of the people that report to me are virtual in the sense that they don't work in the same office that I do, so generally speaking and many times, they're several states away from me, and because of that, the telephone ends up being the device [that] makes it most reasonable for both parties (Bill, personal communication, March 11, 2009).

> Prior to training, it could happen either on a phone call, very casual, might be during the interaction of the day. So if we have a lunch break, sort of a time where we will tend to catch up or maybe if the morning's slow, we'll identify that time to just go over business, where you at, what's on your calendar? Oh, that's right; you have that training coming up. Let's sit down and talk about that (Sandra, personal communication, March 10, 2009).

Some of the district managers also acknowledged that they approach the pretraining interaction differently based on whether their direct report is a new hire going away to attend initial sales training (IST) or a more experienced representative who is going to participate in advanced or developmental training. The difference in approach was sometimes linked to a new employee having so much more to learn about company procedures, management expectations, and products, as well as that the supervisor had no previous experience with new report to instill confidence that he or she would be a disciplined and diligent learner in the training environment. Carlos articulates this perspective in this way:

The approach is different in that now it's a known entity that I'm dealing with. Before, in the IST scenario I've only met them a couple times, two one-hour sessions basically and, therefore, I'm trying to really catch up to speed to get to know them professionally, work ethic wise grasp of the material. When they go back, say a year later or 6 months later, for any advanced training that they may have, [I use] a much different approach. I won't necessarily sit down with them at all. I will still give them a phone call and make sure that they've done all the prework that is required and to spend ample time in preparing for that work in order to, you know, participate on a very active basis. Once again, setting that higher bar of expectations that hey, once again these are now other people outside our…I don't want to call it the safe zone, but outside our district where people know you, so now you want to definitely…especially for the people who want to be promoted, to really shine and that's your moment to really impact and engage (Carlos, personal communication, March 23, 2009).

Vanessa, a regional sales director, emphasized how she worked to leverage interaction among team members and explained how she holds team-based teleconferences approximately 1-week prior to learning events:

I have a group conference call when people are going to training and they're taking the same class…I talk with them about the regional expectations of performance and what that particular learning opportunity does to enhance their ability to work towards the expectations we have as a region. And that when we get together on a conference call [after the training], then we're going to share about our learning and learn from each other again because different people may

take away different things from the same training opportunity. They may have

heard different things, they may incorporate it into their daily execution

differently, and I think that sort of group opportunity to discuss before and after

helps people also to look for different things (personal communication, March 24,

2009).

Vanessa also reported that prior to this call, she will usually "send an e-mail out with

questions in it and I'll say I would really like for you guys to…fill this out and shoot it

back to me and then we'll have a conference call around this" (personal communication,

March 24, 2009). She stated that with this information, she is better equipped to facilitate

the discussion during the teleconference.

Finding 2: Most study participants (11 of 14) reported having an intentional and

structured approach to posttraining interactions; however, there was little consistency in

methodology and few clearly defined actions that supported long-term performance

improvement reported. A few of the study participants (3 of 14) described a haphazard

and spontaneous approach to posttraining interactions.

Most of the managers who participated in the study claimed that they had at least

one purposeful interaction with their direct reports to discuss training that was recently

completed. Some study participants described a precise process for this follow-up, as in

the following examples:

It will probably be a phone call to put a meeting on the books. Like, okay, we are

working together [in the] next 2 weeks. What about Friday? How does your

schedule look? Friday tends to be a typical time where we'll meet and that's

where they will sort of teach back to me. Like: What did you learn? What were

your takeaways? How will you apply this in your job? How will you apply this in any aspect? Is it one of those skills that you could do (Sandra, personal communication, March 10, 2009)?

So within the next week or two, I will be with that individual and we will sit down and I'll be like: So tell me everything about training? I just let them talk. What they learned and what'd they think. What would they improve upon? What did they think was outstanding? What was one thing that they walked away that changed them.…I want to make sure first off the training was something they felt was a benefit and, obviously, if it's something that I picked out for them, there's a specific reason why, and obviously, my goal is for them to adjust to that behavior. But, obviously, I think a person to adjust to a behavior has to come upon this behavior and they need to change upon themselves. And so obviously, during the conversations, I may ask questions along the way. I may say: Okay. Well show me an example of how when you're at this advanced training you did this role-play. Can you share with me how you felt? And when you did the role-play, what kind of questions did you ask? Okay. Now if you brought this in the real world, how do you think this would play out? And if it's something like they can actually apply immediately: Well when we're in the field, let's try it out. It might be awkward at first because you just learned it. Or let's practice together (Mandy, personal communication, March 20, 2009).

Other study participants described informal techniques that were applied in the course of other business interactions. The following examples suggest a less intentional and more spontaneous approach to posttraining interactions:

During ride alongs, I will discuss, okay, what did you learn and what have you done to apply that in the field and share with me a few examples and usually that will be while we're driving around or during lunch (Carlos, personal communication, March 23, 2009).

If it's rep-initiated training…I probably don't have a lot of conversations other than on our next ride day or the next time we speak on the phone. How was your training? Did you like it? What'd you get out of it? Was it everything you hoped? [It's] just that kind of follow-up (Rachel, personal communication, March 13, 2009).

I think all too often they do not occur or they will occur as discussions, sort of spontaneous discussions when we're in the field together and issues pop up where, points we're learning pop up and I don't think, at least for me, there's not a systematic reinforcement and maybe there should be. Actually, I think that if there is a systematic reinforcement it is about, it's around the material where, okay, so, we just learned two products and whether it's modeling for me or whether it's recalling information that they would have learned in training, then that's an opportunity for reinforcement. It's around the material, but it's not set aside as, okay so now I'd like to review several points that you pulled out of training (Ed, personal communication, March 17, 2009).

Some of the supervisors clearly recognized their role in supporting their direct reports in making applications long after the end of the training event. These managers had an intentional approach that included specific actions:

So, I have found through my experience that I am absolutely putting hard dates, deadlines, and expectations in place. So I learned that just their concept of what I seek in the individual leadership and ownership for them to do the specific posttasks, unfortunately, gets absorbed into the challenges they face to do their day-to-day, all the priorities. So I am absolutely now to a point where I'm literally putting things on the calendar. It's: Here's an invite, here's what I expect. The next conference call, here's the preagenda, which I want you to present at the next group meeting, our next one on one. So I'm literally putting it on a calendar now and even to the point that I'm even, on the calendar, I'm setting it up for a 2-day reminder that pops up 2 days before that it's going to be due 2 days. I'm trying to get the repetitive expectation setting even when it's not me saying it, just sticking it on an Outlook calendar, can actually remind them of what I expect all the time (Marty, personal communication, March 11, 2009).

I think you have to support that person because I am asking the same thing of them. I am teaching them things that I want them to take risk and try and even if it's time management, you'll check in on that once a quarter, once a month. Like…How's that going for you? Gosh, I'm struggling. You know, shared that tip and.…You know, I have to admit, I want to go back to my old ways. So you just sort of check with individuals how they are and put out suggestions if you think that is an area they could expand upon (Sandra, personal communication, March 10, 2009).

If they've given [me] something that they've specifically got out of it, and that we addressed in our posttraining conversation, something to which they

would like me to hold them accountable, and then I physically do that in trip reports. This is one of the things we're working on. Here's how you demonstrated that today. Continue to work on it in these scenarios, however (Rachel, personal communication, March 13, 2009).

I'll ask for no more than two things that they're going to work on posttraining and maybe one thing that they'd like to give me as maybe something that didn't meet their needs.…But then the next question is: How are you going to use it Tuesday through Friday out in the field? What are you going to do? And you almost see them kind of thinking: Well you know, I thought that, you know that rep that just can't get along with the other two pod members? This is how I was thinking of using it. And I'll say: Well let's role-play, how's it going to look? And they love to role play.…And then I'll say this is where the rubber meets the road. I always say, after you have that conversation, I want you and me to catch up. I want you to tell me what you got through from that. And then, somehow find a way to get what they've shared with me into the ears of the other [district managers] (Pat, personal communication, March 26, 2009).

Some supervisors offered examples of how they leveraged technology to promote training transfer. For example, Pat explained that he uses the calendar function in his computer software package to schedule an entire series of posttraining discussions and allows the system's alarm to remind him as the dates approach. In describing how he might send e-mail to an individual or leave a group voice mail message for his team to encourage the application of a new skill, Carlos offered the following example:

I'll follow-up with e-mails and just going hey, today we discussed this, this, this,

and that. For the next few weeks, I'd like you to incorporate some of these

thoughts and ideas and embrace them. Make them your own and the next time we

get together on the next field day, we'll see how that can be incorporated.…Every

now and then, I'll follow up with voice mails that are more team specific. It

would be: Hey team. This is Carlos. Just following up from a couple of weeks

ago, we learned the clinical relevance or the key messages for this new product,

so I just want to reinforce that it looks like we will have the most success out

there delivering [that] information (Carlos, personal communication, March 23,

2009).

Study participants also described how they use teleconferences with their entire

teams to promote training transfer. The reasons given for using this approach ranged from

the teams being geographically dispersed to the entire team had completed the same

training, so they were trying to create synergy and provide opportunities to share best

practices. The following examples of the use of teleconferences were offered:

Usually sometimes like 2 weeks posttraining, advanced training, I'll have a

conference call with the entire district say for a half hour or 45 minutes to kind of

review certain key topics that were covered in training to see if they've had any

challenges incorporating or discussing that material when they're out in the field

on their sales calls (Carlos, personal communication, March 23, 2009).

When they come back, their learning also is kind of interesting too

because there are different sorts of pearls and nuggets that people pick up and

how they're going to apply those and implement them. But I think that sort of

94

magnifies the learning process for the individual as opposed to, okay this is my world and I'm looking at what this can do for me. They're looking at it as: Wow, I now see how this impacts the organization that I'm working within. I see how I can apply this and I see how others are applying it. And there's also an opportunity to have sort of peer mentoring also around issues that they may be attempting to manage and they can leverage the training better because they can discuss.…And so, I think they're able to just magnify the experience because of the group discussion (Vanessa, personal communication, March 24, 2009).

Finding 3: The majority of study participants (11 of 14) reported having little interaction with direct reports during training events. Some participants who did have interactions with direct reports focused largely on personal expressions of support that had little to do with the content of the training or how newly acquired skills would be applied in the workplace. Several managers allowed their direct reports to dictate the nature and timing of the communication, while only a few managers were proactive in seeking information as a means of assessing engagement. Some of the managers (2 of 14) who more actively communicated with their direct reports during training described these interactions as opportunities to assess their direct reports' level of commitment and simply get to know them better as new members of the team. One of the managers described a unique situation in which her entire team was at the same location attending a number of different courses at the same location and she called a midweek meeting to reconnect and give everyone the opportunity to share what they were learning.

Overall, study participants had relatively little communication with their direct reports when they were away training—even when the training lasted several weeks. The

rationale generally given for this lack of interaction was based on the belief that the trainees were extremely busy and under pressure while they were away at training, and the manager did not want to burden them with additional commitments or create further stress. When there was communication during training, it was primarily personal expressions of support and offers of assistance. The managers described their interactions in the following ways:

It's through text and it's generally done on Friday. Saying hi, just checking in to see how you are doing, how you survived the week and if you want to chat, let me know, but I figured you're going to be fine. I just leave it to them just because they have a lot going on and they're nervous and they are away from their families. So I don't want to make it a point where they have to feel obligated to talk to me, but at least they know I am reaching out to them and I'm thinking about them (Kim, personal communication, March 3, 2009).

Very minimal.…And my reason for doing that is I don't want to be more pressure and even somebody who is experienced, so someone going away, that might just be an added layer or maybe, they think, I'm getting a report card on them at night or like a big brother, especially because most of our training is within the company. So, no, I really don't, minimal contacts (Sandra, personal communication, March 10, 2009).

The standard was leave all alone. Let them learn, let them go through the experience.…Phone calls, not so much because primarily they're booked 8 to 5 with a dinner function that evening or they're all going to dinner, so the last

person they really want to talk to is their boss (Andy, personal communication, March 11, 2009).

As an initial sales district manager hiring entry-level people, I don't have interaction with them. They're back in Chicago for 2 or 3 weeks. I may get phone calls from them, but they're really in the hands of the trainers at the home office…so limited interaction (Keith, personal communication, March 23, 2009).

Minimal interaction if they're away in training, the communication, predominantly, either by e-mail or voice mail. The role is more supportive. How are you doing? What are your experiences? Are you learning anything new? What can you share? That type of approach (Ann, personal communication, March 24, 2009).

Other managers had more interaction with their direct reports during training events. The degree of interaction was based, in part, on the length of the course. Bill described his approach in this way:

I guess it depends on how long the class is. I can't tell you that I know of any classes that I've sent anybody to that has been longer than 5 days and in that case, yeah, there was interaction—typically in the evenings just to see how things went periodically maybe once during that course. When classes are like 2-days long, typically no.

Basically, [I ask about] their experience up to that point, did it start well, are they intrigued by the offering that they're in, do they feel that they've learned anything so far? Did I set the course up with realistic expectations or did I miss the mark in setting it up for them before they went there and telling them pretty

much my hope is the rest of the course will line up like I was telling them that I

was hoping it would (Bill, personal communication, March 11, 2009).

Ed does not interact consistently with his direct reports when they are in training

and when he does, it is often because he is concerned about their level of engagement. Ed

described his approach this way:

I will occasionally touch base with them just to ask how things are going.

Oftentimes that's if I have any concerns about whether they're following through,

whether this is just a boondoggle or junket for them.…Might be voice mail,

usually telephone, we'll have conversations where I'm just checking in on them,

just wanting to know how training is going and start very broadly and then dig a

little deeper, just depending on their enthusiasm and reaction to the course (Ed,

personal communication, March 17, 2009).

John, another manager, suggested that he wanted to check in at the end of each

week of training to do a make a quick assessment of his direct reports' progress in the

class, answer questions, and to determine whether there were any red flags he needed to

address. He offered the following:

A lot of it is more just checking in. It's more so just gut checks. Giving the call:

Hey, how's it going? Are you comfortable? Are there, uh, are there any questions

that you had that maybe haven't been addressed? It's more so just an opportunity

to reach out to the individual, just as a gut check, like I said (John, personal

communication, March 11, 2009).

When asked what his goals were for having these gut checks, he replied:

Identify if there are any red flags, so to speak. Hey, you know what, I'm not

grasping this information, or I'm having a tough time during this role play week. I

don't know if I'm ready to go ahead and communicate what I've learned textbook

with being able to just verbalize it. Yeah, just more so if there's any red

flags…help out where I can (John, personal communication, March 11, 2009).

Some managers allowed their direct reports to dictate the nature and timing of the

communication. The following are examples of this approach:

I think it depends on the person because I think you have to cater your needs

around that individual person; some people like to pick up the phone and call me,

talk to me a lot, some people just send an e-mail, so it depends on that person.

And I think having a team and managing the same team for a certain period of

time you know their communication style. I have one rep, for example, I need to

talk to her two or three times a week, and if I don't, then it seems like things

escalate, not that they escalate, but it just seems that, that person just likes to share

things…just likes to get feedback and input. So when this person goes to training,

I will call her more often than others and just kind of see how things are, check in,

make sure everything's going as planned (Mandy, personal communication,

March 20, 2009).

I leave it up to them to contact me either once or twice during that 1st

week at their convenience. Some people call me right after and most of them do

call right after one of the days of work, so from 8—5 during the classroom setting

after that, before they go to dinner or workout or start prepping for the next day,

you know we'll have like a 10-minute phone call just kind of reviewing how

they're feeling about the training, are there any issues, what was kind of some of

the ah-ha moments today, take what messages that they learned about they may

not have known about prior to attending the training (Carlos, personal

communication, March 23. 2009).

> I'll say: Hey, I'd like to give you the opportunity if you'd like to reach out
>
> to me while you're at training to touch base, at the same one-on-one time we have
>
> or whatever time works for you. I will leave a Friday open for you or whatever
>
> you want, but if you'd like to check-in and chat with me a little bit, I want you to
>
> know, that the resource is there for you. If not, we can catch up when you get
>
> back. One hundred percent of the time, they want to check-in and say hi anyway;
>
> they want to talk (Pat, personal communication, March 26, 2009).

Vanessa, offered a recollection of a unique situation in which her entire team was

engaged in a training conference at the same location, but many of the team members

were taking different courses. Vanessa described her informal interaction with the group

in this way:

> When we did the program in Newport Beach, different managers had selected
>
> different courses and we actually arranged in advance to sort of, a check-in in the
>
> middle of the week while we're all there to see what some of the key takeaways
>
> were. Was the training sort of meeting the expectations that they had had and that
>
> we had had prior to them coming in? So I would say that when we're there
>
> together, and it's possible, we usually do that sort of check-in at either dinner or
>
> drinks or whatever, but it's not formalized (Vanessa, personal communication,
>
> March 26, 2009).

Finding 4: The majority of study participants (9 of 14) indicated that their managers had done little to help them apply what they had learned in classes to their jobs. As a result, the majority of study participants were not satisfied with the degree of support they had received and desired more productive interactions that would promote training transfer. Some study participants (3 of 14) indicated that it was not their manager's responsibility to promote transfer; instead, they believed it was the learner's responsibility to apply what they had learned in training. One of the study participants was completely satisfied with the support she had received and another manager was moderately satisfied.

Although the study participants had a sense of the importance of helping their direct reports transfer training and had made some effort to do so, most had received little support from their managers throughout the years. All study participants acknowledged that applying training was important, yet most acknowledged how difficult this could be without reinforcement and support. Participants described this lack of support and its consequences in the following ways:

I think that's why I haven't really used a whole lot of, yeah, any of those things. So it's hard to apply something that you learned if you don't feel like you could…it was hard to apply to what I do every single day. And the fact that, you know, after the course, my manager just said: How was the course? And I gave him my feedback and that was the end of it. So if someone gave me their perspective, well I took the course too and this is what I took out of it and this is how I saw that I was able to utilize it. Let's talk about a couple of examples how

you could do it. I think that would have helped (Kim, personal communication, March 3, 2009).

I think it has all been left up to the participant—me being the participant in this case and if I felt like it was valuable enough then I should go do something about it. I think the people that have been trained as educators probably put more emphasis on the total experience than those who have just come up through the ranks and haven't been trained as educators (Bill, personal communication, March 11, 2009).

There hasn't been that much…I feel that I could be even in a much stronger and better position had there been more management involvement, more creating the tension if you will, or the [discomfort] that I try to create in my folks.…Looking back at it now, objectively, I really wish there was more. I was blazing my own trail of growth and development, which has worked out nicely, but I sit and think, not regret, but I sit and think what incrementally, where could I be incrementally on that trend line, had there been a more hands-on manager, leader, mentor type [with] my day-to-day manager (Marty, personal communication, March 11, 2009).

He recommends something in my annual evaluation, you know, based on areas of development, he may recommend a class or two. If you can find a class in this area, I would recommend it. And then to pull through they may check with you once or twice immediately following the course, but I don't know if it's a consistent pull-through, and honestly I think everybody's just so busy that they have that initial touch following the class, what did you learn, what did you gain

from the class, what did you take away, and how will that make you better, but if it's 6 months later trying to instill those traits, I don't know how many of us actually do that on a consistent basis (Keith, personal communication, March 23, 2009).

The communication is probably through e-mail and teleconferences. Great learning opportunity that's become available for us, make sure you sign up for your courses. Kind of think about where you are developmentally as a manager, what this opportunity would look like. The expectation is, if there's material you want to review in advance, make sure that gets done. It's more task oriented (Ann, personal communication, March 24, 2009).

Andy suggested that his past managers had frequently encouraged him to go into each training experience with an eye toward evaluation. Upon his return, his manager would ask: Okay, your personal assessment: What were the strengths? What would blend with the organization? How does it work? Yet Andy seemed to want transparency with his managers that would allow him to say: Look, I'm not doing well with this. Am I missing something? Instead, he expressed frustration that he was "driving a lot more of [his] development by nature than [I am] being guided by my manager" (personal communication, March 11, 2009.). When asked how satisfied he was with the support provided by his managers relative to training transfer, Andy said simply, "Not very" (personal communication, March 11, 2009).

On the other end of the scale, Sandra stated that her level of satisfaction with the support she had received was "ten out of ten" (personal communication, March 10, 2009). She went on to explain, "I've seen a big push behind supporting those

trainings...they're making sure that the training does have impact when we leave"

(personal communication, March 10, 2009). However, Sandra also noted that she was the

one who often initiated the posttraining interaction with her manager: "I will always type

something up or share with the manager on that once-a-week call. I went to training, you

may recall, training was about this" (personal communication, March 10, 2009). Sandra

was pleased to note that her managers had always responded favorably to her proactive

approach and often asked her to put together a presentation of the course's highlights at

an upcoming team meeting.

Carlos was moderately satisfied with the level of support he received from his

supervisor following training. When asked to describe the nature of any interactions with

his manager posttraining, Carlos said:

A week of two after training, he would just check in either, both ways, either

individual phone calls or conference calls kind of just getting feedback. Hey, you

know what seems to work? We learned this in the classroom setting. Have you

guys applied it? What's worth keeping? Do you think we need to rethink our

approach in terms of delivering this, or utilizing that training to be impactful in

what we do? (Carlos, personal communication, March 23, 2009).

Although he stated that his level of satisfaction was overall good, Carlos added, "It would

have been nice to get a little bit more structure and support" (personal communication,

March 23, 2009).

Vanessa explained that she initiated most of the interactions with her manager

around training and solicited performance feedback by noting:

I started actually scheduling my calls with her, as opposed to her taking the

initiative. I would just say: I'm going to this course and this is what I'm looking

to get out of it and this is how I'm looking to apply it. When I come back, we'll

talk about it and as I go forward and you see my interactions in different areas, I

really want you to either acknowledge that I'm demonstrating skill in this area

now or sort of check me on it and get some accountability there (Vanessa,

personal communication, March 24, 2009).

When the researchers pressed her for an evaluation of her experiences using this

approach with her manager, Vanessa replied, "I don't know if I'm satisfied with that. I

don't know if I like taking the initiative so much" (personal communication, March 24,

2009).

Three of the district managers interviewed acknowledged that they had received

little encouragement from their managers to apply training, but these participants held the

view that it was not their manager's responsibility. Rather, they believed it was a personal

responsibility to use what they had learned. They said the following:

Ultimately it's up to me to take the stuff I learned and apply it to what I'm doing

day in and day out. So in that respect, it's nice to know when a [regional manager]

has taken an interest in my own professional development, but I haven't said: You

know what, I'm not going to take ownership of it because the accountability's not

there because my manager's not going to ask me about it later anyway (John,

personal communication, March 11, 2009).

I don't really think it's their responsibility.…it's my personal

development. I'm the one who needs to be committed to it. And certainly, if I had

asked them to help me, at least the majority of them, I don't doubt that they would

105

have done that or will do that. I just never asked. I don't think it's their job (Rachel, personal communication, March 13, 2009).

Because I'm more independent so I don't necessarily need that hands on. I believe in lifelong learning. I learn from my experiences and the experiences of others; so to have a manager that's providing a close follow-up isn't necessary for me, per se, but I hold myself accountable….So I hold myself to a higher standard and I make sure I just totally execute versus looking for my manager to fuel that in me or motivate that process in me (Ann, personal communication, March 24, 2009).

Finding 5: A majority (8 of 14) of study participants considered their lack of time and competing priorities to be the primary barriers that kept them from doing more to promote training transfer with their direct reports. The other study participants offered a range of responses that included a lack of personal emphasis on transfer promoting activities and a belief that the learner's negative attitude toward the learning and its application was often an impediment to sustained transfer. One manager said that because it was an important part of her job, she simply made it a priority.

Study participants reported that busy schedules, lack of discretionary time, and the many competing priorities they faced on a daily basis were factors that kept them from doing more to promote on-the-job application of newly acquired skills among their direct reports. Some suggested that they were in constant crisis-management mode, with little time to plan thoughtfully interactions with their direct reports and to reinforce the application of learning consistently. Many of the participants seemed exasperated with

the pace of their lives and frustrated with their lack of time. They described these barriers in the following ways:

> Time constraints.…There's only 24 hours in a day and multiple strings pulling at the same time, so regularly crises trump should-do's, so if there's enough crises in any given day or week, things that should be done or would be helpful to be done, quite frankly just don't make the list (Rachel, personal communication, March 13, 2009).

> It is finding a way to make it a priority in the midst of everything else that has to take place. There is work and business that needs to be conducted. This is additive to that.…The barriers are going to be just the typical events that take place in work that fills up the day (Bill, personal communication, March 11, 2009).

> It is damn…excuse my language…it is very difficult to stay on track with that constant reinforcement with 9 or 10 managers. It's almost like…you're their developer or you're the manager of that entire area. So it's almost like there is a point of diminishing return that we always have to play with (Andy, personal communication, March 11, 2009).

> Well, as a new manager, I just feel like there's just so much going on. I mean, honestly, administratively, I don't think I'm on top of everything.…Right now I've got people to hire. I've got, you know, people to talk to to make sure they are fine. I've got administrative stuff. I've got reps that don't get along. So just a lot of administrative stuff. I feel it's a barrier (Kim, personal communication, March 3, 2009).

It's called all of the manager's tasks that they have to do.…It's time. Sometimes for me it's just all about just balancing the time that we've been given to accomplish everything.…Sometimes it's cognitive overload; you can't process it all, so you only apply the maybe 75% to each individual process.…It's managing all the different dynamics that sometimes minimize your ability to put 100% into everything all the time (Ann, personal communication, March 24, 2009).

Just, you know, available time.…Decrease e-mails by 60%.…In fact, I've been keeping track in the last, since July 1st, so it's been 9 months, yeah, 3,700 e-mails. Work-related e-mails, so you have to open each one. I mean just the time, I mean I haven't extrapolated that, but you know some are just quick looks and you're done with it. Others take action. Others you have to forward because they only copied the managers and oh, please forward on to your reps and I'm just going, wow (Carlos, personal communication, March 23, 2009).

One district manager, Sandra, noted that her schedule was also hectic, but she would not allow that to become an excuse. One of Sandra's primary techniques for reinforcing learning is to have direct reports who attend training make a presentation to their colleagues during a team meeting describing what they had learned and how they would apply it. Sandra considered these presentations to be so important that she would make them a priority and fit them in no matter how full the agenda. She offered this explanation about the symbolism associated with her approach:

If we've taken the time…to send someone to a class, giving them time to teach back to us, I must think this is pretty darn important and, therefore, I wouldn't be

108

doing my job unless I kept pulling that through. So it's sort of that higher standard

I have as a manager (Sandra, personal communication, March 10, 2009).

Another district manager, Mandy, did not mention that a lack of time was a

barrier. Instead, Mandy suggested that the representative's attitude toward change could

be a barrier keeping them from trying new approaches. She explained it in this way:

I think sometimes if a rep has a wall up and doesn't believe in the training or

doesn't believe that's the right way to do something, that could be a barrier. And

that could be like, we all get in routines and habits. This is what I do in each and

every call. I'm not going to change. Well, trying to get them open to try

something different: Humor me. Let's see if there's a different outcome (Mandy,

personal communication, March 20, 2009).

Summary

This chapter presented five major findings that describe the lived experiences of

supervisors as they endeavor to facilitate training transfer for their direct reports within a

pharmaceutical sales organization. The findings resulted from an inductive process of

discovery as the researcher immersed himself in the stories and descriptions of study

participants. The researcher made generous use of participant quotes to represent the

reality of the study participants, to offer the reader a sense for what was said during the

in-depth interviews, and to provide evidence for his findings (Bloomberg & Volpe,

2008).

The primary finding of the study was that district managers and regional sales

directors in this pharmaceutical sales organization have interactions with their direct

reports before they leave for training. In fact, all of the managers who participated in the

study claimed to have some sort of interaction with their direct reports prior to training. However, the other element of this finding suggests that the quality of these interactions is inconsistent. It ranges from informal expressions of support to purposeful discussions that lay out the manager's expectations and create a clear link to business results that might be derived if the learner masters the skills presented. This wide variation in approach calls into question the efficacy of these interactions.

The second finding of the study was that most district managers and regional sales directors have posttraining interactions with their direct reports consistently. Moreover, the nature of these interactions seems to be somewhat more structured and focused on how the content of the recently attended training might be used on the job. Nevertheless, there was not a standard approach for these posttraining discussions and, as a result, the quality of the interactions varied widely. Few managers described a precise methodology for helping their direct reports sustain behavior change. Instead, most participants described only the initial posttraining interaction.

The third finding of the study was that district managers and regional sales directors have little interaction with their direct reports during training events. Participants again suggested a variation in approach, but most of the interactions described were casual expressions of encouragement and had little to do with how training could be applied in the workplace. One of the primary reasons given for this lack of engagement with direct reports was based on the assumption that the trainees were busy with the training regimen and the manager would be creating an additional burden on the fully encumbered learner. With this frame of reference, several study participants

considered their hands-off approach to be a means of helping their direct reports survive the rigors of the training process.

The fourth finding was that study participants received little support from their managers in applying newly acquired knowledge and skills to their daily practice in the workplace. While approaches again varied, some study participants described a more task- or process-oriented approach related to the annual performance appraisal or the registration process for courses offered through the organization's leadership development program. Other managers described generalized follow-up, often done as part of a group meeting or teleconference.

Several managers expressed disappointment in the lack of support they received and felt that their managers should be more involved as a partner in their developmental journey. The study participants who expressed a favorable impression of past interactions with their managers on issues related to the application of training described only a general sense of support or the ways in which a manager had favorably responded to contact initiated and driven by the subordinate manager.

A few study participants considered their manager to have a limited role in their development or in helping them to apply what they had learned in courses. In other words, they believed it was not their manager's responsibility. Some suggested that having a manager's support was desirable, but certainly not necessary for their growth. It was nice to have, but not needed. These managers considered themselves to be independent and self-sufficient in this area, and that it was their personal responsibility to develop professionally.

The final major finding of the study was that district and regional managers believed their lack of time and competing priorities to be the primary factors that prevented them from doing more to promote training transfer with their direct reports. Study participants described busy schedules, administrative overload, competing priorities, near daily crises, and an electronic in-box that is always full. Managers expressed feelings of frustration about always being on the run, with little time available for follow-up on training activities and strategic thinking. Most participants seemed to concede that it was the nature of their jobs and there was little they could do to change their circumstances.

The next and final chapter in this study will analyze, interpret, and synthesize the findings. Organizational implications will also be presented and discussed. Finally, the researcher will draw conclusions and make actionable recommendations for further research and practice.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Introduction

Fueled by a concern that organizations continue to invest substantial resources into training programs (Paradise, 2008; Van Buren & Erskine, 2002) that often do little to change employee behaviors (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Brinkerhoff, 2006; Garavaglia, 1993; Georgenson, 1982; P. P. Phillips & J. J. Phillips, 2007) and aware of the growing body of research that provides evidence for the notion that an employee's immediate supervisor can positively affect training transfer (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Bates et al. 1996; Brinkerhoff & Jackson, 2003; Brinkerhoff & Montesino, 1995; Huczynski & Lewis, 1980; Saks & Belcourt, 2006; Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992; Weiss et al., 1980), the researcher wanted to understand the degree to which frontline leaders in a typical organizational setting are engaged in practices that promote training transfer. More specifically, the researcher focused his inquiry on the experiences of supervisors in a pharmaceutical sales organization as they endeavor to facilitate training transfer for their direct reports.

A phenomenological approach was chosen as the means to explore this question. The researcher conducted 14 in-depth interviews with purposely selected district managers and regional sales directors in a large, research-based pharmaceutical company to gather qualitative data. While the researcher selected participants based on established criteria and the belief that they could provide helpful insight on the phenomenon under investigation, he also sought to create a diverse group of respondents who reflected the demographic characteristics of the organization overall and who might offer a diversity of opinion. For that reason, men and women, Caucasian and non-Caucasian, and managers

with varying degrees of experience were invited to participate. However, the findings of this research, as presented in Chapter 4 of this study, did not reveal any patterns that could be associated with these demographic differences.

The interviews were conducted in a variety of settings. Half of the interviews were conducted in the study participant's office or a nearby conference room in a company-owned facility. The other interviews were conducted in restaurants or coffee shops. In all cases, the study participant chose the meeting location as a matter of convenience. Although there was often a higher level of ambient noise and a few general distractions in the public meeting places, the researcher perceived no differences in the way study participants responded to questions or demonstrated engagement in the interview process. An analysis of the data revealed no patterns of response associated with the location of the interview.

The purpose of this final chapter is to analyze and interpret the findings of this research in a way that will create knowledge that can be applied creatively in organizational settings (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The goal is to help leaders better leverage resources to drive sustainable behavioral change in people and, in turn, drive positive results for the organization. With that in mind, the researcher will use the final pages of this study to provide a small bit of wisdom for practitioners and organizational leaders, as well as make suggestions for further research that would build on this work and increase the collective understanding of similar issues.

The approach used to analyze, interpret, and draw conclusions from the data was based on an "inductive questioning process rooted in the works of Lindeman, Dewey, and Piaget, who were advocates of an experiential and dialogical education" (Bloomberg &

Volpe, 2008, p. 129). This process begins with the researcher consistently asking the basic questions, why and why not, with the intent of exhausting all of the potential explanations for the finding. The answers to these questions, analyzed in the context of the literature and an understanding of the organizational setting, might then lead to conclusions that are meaningful and potentially useful.

This chapter is organized around the analysis and interpretation of the major findings of this study as grouped into two analytic categories: (a) the actions of managers as promoters of training transfer, and (b) the environmental factors within the organization that promote or inhibit positive training transfer. These sections will be followed by the researcher's recommendations and final words.

Management Actions

Analysis

The category of management actions combines the first three major findings of this research based on the view that supervisors largely control the nature of interactions with direct reports before, during, and after they participate in company-sponsored training. As field-based supervisors of sales personnel, district managers and regional sales directors work independently and are given substantial discretion, within certain broad parameters, in how they use their time. For the most part, their activities are not closely monitored by superiors and the nature of their interactions with direct reports is loosely structured and self-directed. The researcher discovered no checks or management controls that suggested these leaders were being held accountable for particular activities that supported training or training transfer. The degree to which district managers and regional sales directors are autonomous performers and are given substantial control over

their routines is a likely explanation for the wide variation in how interactions with their direct reports on the subject of training were described.

The literature makes it clear that supervisors play an important role in promoting positive training transfer among their direct reports. Tannenbaum and Yukl (1992) note that the pretraining environment, largely driven by the overt actions of managers, influences training effectiveness. They explain that managers send signals about whether the training is important and the degree to which employees should invest in it. The findings of the present research reveal that all managers in the subject sales organization are not sending consistent cues and signals to direct reports.

The responses of some study participants suggested a clearly defined and productive approach that is consistent with proven principles of adult learning (Knowles et al., 2005). Several participants described their perception of the importance of employees knowing why they are being sent to training and how the training will help with real business challenges or better equip them to drive organizational results. Managers also described how knowing the learning objectives for a particular training course allowed them to link the content to business needs and focus their direct reports during pretraining interactions. Brinkerhoff and Jackson (2003) confirm this idea by suggesting that the most productive pretraining discussions are "a dialogue between employees and managers that creates a sharp focus and shared agreement on performance improvement and business goals" (p. 23). Based on the responses of study participants, these sharply focused conversations are sometimes taking place in the organization.

Unfortunately, these focused pretraining conversations do not occur consistently among study participants. Some of the managers interviewed described a very informal

approach that included little more than well wishes via a brief telephone conversation prior to a direct report's departure for a training event. Another manager described how her primary goal was simply to make the trainee feel comfortable, reduce his or her anxiety about the training process, and provide emotional support. This lack of consistency in approach among supervisors is likely to lead to less than optimal performance among a broad base of trainees and negatively impact organizational results.

The literature also recognizes the importance of manager involvement after the training event. Gregoire et al. (1998) discovered that trainees perceived that their training was more effective when their supervisors provide support and coaching after the event. More recently, Gumuseli and Ergin (2002) confirmed that sales representatives who participated in company-sponsored training indicated greater productivity, effectiveness, and satisfaction when their supervisors reinforced the training. The findings of the present study indicate that some managers have productive follow-up conversations with their direct reports and demonstrate behaviors that support training transfer after the event, but these actions are not consistent across the board.

Some of the participants in the study articulated an active and ongoing approach in their support of direct reports who were attempting to apply newly acquired skills in the workplace. For example, Sandra described how she would schedule a meeting with the returning training almost immediately upon his or her to work. During the meeting, she would ask her direct report to share what she had learned and explain how she intended to apply it on-the-job. Mandy described how she would role-play with her representatives upon their return from training and how she would continue to practice with them in subsequent meetings.

Unfortunately, other study participants did little to promote training transfer effectively after the event. For example, Rachel and Ed reported having only cursory follow-up conversations to gauge their trainees' reaction and general perceptions of the recently attended event. These casual conversations occurred randomly during the course of a field travel days and did not lead to the development of an action plan or systemic reinforcement. Again, this inconsistency in approach and failure of supervisors to follow-up effectively is likely to reduce training transfer.

The body of evidence in support of the supervisor's role during training events is less robust. However, Noe (1986) demonstrated that when trainees are given occasions to discuss potential application opportunities during the training event, the likelihood of future transfer is greater. This logic of this finding is consistent with the well-established adult learning principle that adults are more likely to retain and apply what they learn if their orientation is problem-centered and contextual (Knowles et al., 2005). Therefore, to have a manager interact with his or her direct report to create this orientation would potentially benefit learning outcomes.

In this study, participants described a range of approaches to the interactions they had with their direct reports during training. Some participants had no contact at all, others allowed their direct reports to dictate the nature and timing of these communications, and still others had regular and relatively frequent interactions throughout the time their direct reports were in training. Similarly, the purpose of these interactions was depicted in a variety of ways. Some participants wanted to express personal support and encouragement and others wanted to assess their learners' work ethic and commitment. A few participants felt that any interaction during the training

program would be considered burdensome by their direct report and, therefore, not pursued. Once more, there was a lack of consistency in approach and no clear pattern that would define best practice.

Interpretation

Based on the prior analysis, it appears that the district managers and regional sales directors in this pharmaceutical sales organization have a general sense for what they need to do, as illustrated by their consistent descriptions of having pre- and posttraining discussions with their direct reports. The wide variation in attitudes toward these discussions, approaches used, and self-reported perceptions of limited efficacy suggest that some of the managers did not know how to have these conversations or why they were important. In other words, it was clear from the data that some of the supervisors in the study did not have the knowledge and skills needed to conduct these interactions effectively nor did they recognize the value of these conversations as drivers of sustained behavior change.

One potential reason for the lack of knowledge and skill in this area is that little to no training has been offered for supervisors in support of their efforts to promote training transfer. Although not a focus of this research, some study participants revealed that they had been exposed to little or no information that explained how they should interact with their direct reports before or after training events or provided techniques on how supervisors could reinforce newly acquired skills. Some of the managers who articulated a more rigorous approach in supporting training transfer explained that they had heard a brief lecture on ways to make learning stick conducted by a member of the company's training department in the past or had discussed the concept with a peer and this

influenced their current practice. Other managers suggested that it was their experience and observation throughout the years that drove them be more active in encouraging their direct reports to apply what they learned in company training programs.

Another reason for the wide variation in approaches might be reasonably based on the lack of performance expectations for managers in this area. With the exception of Pat, a regional sales director who mentioned his personal desire to model transfer promoting behaviors for the district managers who reported to him, none of the study participants mentioned any sort of accountability or performance measures associated with facilitating training transfer. Rather, it seemed that those managers who were having productive pre- and posttraining interactions were doing so because they thought it was somehow helpful and the right thing to do, not because there was any sense that their actions would ever be mentioned in a performance appraisal.

The experience level of study participants might be another explanation for the wide variation in approach to pre- and posttraining interactions with direct reports. Since the sample included district managers with as little as 6 months in their present roles, as well as long-tenured regional sales directors, it could be argued that managers with more time on the job would have greater opportunities to learn from past mistakes and acquire the skills necessary to promote training transfer effectively.

There is some evidence in the data to support this view in that some of the newer district managers such as Kim and Rachel did not describe practices that promoted transfer effectively. Conversely, more experienced managers such as Vanessa, Pat, and Sandra expressed approaches that could be considered approaching best practice. However, there are other examples from the data that suggest that seniority or tenure do

not correlate positively with efficacy in this area. Similarly, the race, gender, and ethnicity of study participants appeared to have no influence on the way in which supervisors approached interactions with their direct reports.

It appears that the most likely interpretation of the findings suggests that a lack of knowledge and skill among first- and second-level sales managers, as well as there being no clear performance expectations or accountability measures, has led to inconsistent execution in the way supervisors facilitate training transfer in this sales organization. Further research would be necessary to explore managers' perceptions of accountability and how these perceptions impact their practice, but it is reasonable to believe that a lack of standard performance expectations contributes to a wide variation in approach. It is also apparent that the organization had not established clear expectations or promoted best practices actively at the time of this research. Further, this study did not attempt to measure the degree to which employees apply new knowledge and skills or what results this is having in the organization; however, it is reasonable to assume that the widely varied approaches used by district managers and regional sales directors are not yielding the best possible results. Recommendations that might lead to a more consistent approach and improved performance among supervisors will be offered later in this chapter.

Organizational Climate

Analysis

The fourth and fifth findings of the research presented in Chapter 4 are categorized as organizational climate issues for purposes of analysis. Yamnill and McLean (2001) address the importance of organizational climate as a "mediating variable" (p. 203) for transfer—a bridge between the organizational context and

individual work behaviors. The climate of the subject organization will be considered in light of the research findings.

In their development of a transfer climate framework, Rouillier and Goldstein (1993) recognized two types of transfer cues—situation and consequence—each with several specific dimensions. One manifestation of a situational cue is social. "Social cues arise from group membership and include the behavior and influence process exhibited by supervisors, peers, and subordinates" (p. 383). Other situation cues include: (a) goal cues that serve to remind employees to use their new skills, (b) task cues that are built into the design of the job, and (c) self-control cues that provide permission for trainees to try new things. Consequence cues include whether employees are given positive or negative feedback, or no feedback at all when they attempt to apply a newly acquired skill in the workplace. Rouillier and Goldstein's explanation of transfer climate is a helpful lens through which to view the transfer climate of this sales organization.

The fourth finding from the present research is suggestive of an organizational climate in which senior managers are not modeling transfer promoting behaviors. Having few social cues from their bosses, district managers and regional sales directors might then reasonably believe that transfer promoting behaviors are not important in the organization and something they could choose to do at their discretion. Similarly, there was relatively little mention of senior leaders offering positive reinforcement that encouraged the deployment of new skills or negative consequences for those who did not make the effort. Some managers, such as Vanessa and Sandra, had to take the initiative and present what they had learned in recent courses to their supervisors. Other participants in the study simply could not recall any substantive conversations with their

immediate supervisors about how they might implement newly acquired skills. As a result, study participants, with only a few exceptions, were not overwhelmingly pleased with the support they had received from superiors.

This lack of support from senior managers and somewhat ineffective attempts at promoting transfer are suggestive of a lack of knowledge and skill among second- and third-level leaders. Since training professionals have done relatively little to engage senior leadership in promoting training transfer in any systemic way and have not done any training that would equip them or make it easy for them to get involved, it is not surprising that there has been little activity. This lack of engagement in the learning process on the part of the organization's second- and third-level leaders further suggests that there is further evidence to suggest that there is no organizational mandate for practicing behaviors that promote training transfer.

The fifth finding of the research noted the overwhelming sense among study participants that a lack of time and the burden of competing priorities made it difficult for them to employ more actively transfer promoting behaviors. Study participants made it clear that they work in a fast-paced environment that requires them to juggle constantly the demands of the job and be ready to shift focus at a moment's notice. The sense from some of the participants was that they were always running to keep up and had little time for thoughtful planning or extended individual conversations with direct reports.

Interpretation

A clear theme has emerged from the analysis suggesting there was not a strong organizational mandate for promoting training transfer at the time this research was conducted. In short, it was simply not a priority. However, this is not unusual in

organizations. Mooney and Brinkerhoff (2008) reinforce this point by noting,

> Most managers are not held accountable for supporting their employees' training.
> They are held accountable for producing sales results, meeting production goals,
> fulfilling customer requests, and so forth. At the end of the year, no manager was
> ever told, "Your unit didn't meet its production goals and your quality was
> terrible, but we are going to give you a hefty bonus because you were the poster
> child for training support." Managers will do what they need to do in order to
> accomplish the goals on which they are being measured. They will not do what is
> perceived as a "nice to do" or a distraction from producing results—such as
> taking time to help freshly trained employees in their efforts to try out new skills.
> (p. 6)

This certainly appears to be the situation in the organization under present consideration.

The more surprising discovery of the research was that there was not a more universal level of frustration among study participants regarding the limited role their managers had played in providing support for the application of learning. After all, these are managers, some of whom are organizational leaders on a fast track, who should want and expect coaching and support to achieve their developmental goals. Yet, few of the study participants expressed a sense of outrage that past managers had not been a more active partner in the developmental process. Some participants clearly thought that their managers in the past could have done more, but several of the respondents told the researcher that they did not think it was their manager's responsibility to hold them accountable for learning. Other managers found the level of support they had received in the past to be quite acceptable. There was even a sense from a few of the participants that

as managers, they were beyond the need for assistance, encouragement, and accountability when it came to applying new skills.

This is, again, suggestive of an organizational climate that has not engaged leaders in the training process and had in the past placed the primary responsibility for training on the training department and, to some extent, the learners who participated in the various training events. Mooney and Brinkerhoff (2008) suggest that in the typical organization, about 85% of the investment in planning and design goes into the workshop or event, leaving only 15% for pre- and postworkshop efforts. This approach seems to be what has occurred in the past at this pharmaceutical sales organization and, as a result, led to an event-focused mentality that has neither engaged managers nor created a sense that motivating, coaching, and providing feedback to training participants was a priority for managers.

In the face of this interpretation of the organizational climate overall, it must not be forgotten that the participants in this study were having pre- and posttraining interactions with their direct reports. Although the findings reveal that these interactions are probably not having the robust impact that yields the greatest possible results, that managers are making some effort, despite having little training and support, is cause for optimism. This also suggests that recommendations for management training, greater involvement on the part of senior leaders, and changes to the overall environment might be more readily accepted.

Recommendations

In this section, the researcher provides the recommendations based on his analysis

of the study's findings. The recommendations that follow are for: (a) learning and development specialists, human resources professionals, training strategists, and organizational leaders; and (b) educational researchers.

Recommendations for Practitioners

Given that supervisors play an integral role in influencing the behavior of their direct reports, the focus of the recommendations that follow is on developing and equipping these frontline leaders to promote training transfer more effectively. Those who influence supervisors and plan training should consider:

1. Providing basic and follow-up training that explains the supervisor's role and responsibilities in promoting training transfer. The training should include clear instruction on how to conduct pre- and posttraining conversations with direct reports who participate in company-sponsored training, as well as techniques for ongoing reinforcement of recently acquired knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

2. Equipping supervisors to have productive pre- and posttraining discussions with their direct reports by providing a summary of the intended learning outcomes for each learning event and explaining how these outcomes link to individual and organizational goals. These clear and concise documents should provide talking points for supervisors to use in conversations with their direct reports.

3. Setting clear expectations and hold managers at all levels accountable for promoting training transfer.

4. Evaluating supervisors based on their ability to coach, mentor, and serve as role models.

5. Ensuring that employees who receive training are given ample opportunity to apply newly acquired knowledge and skills on the job.

6. Instituting an assessment process that determines whether training is being used, whether it is driving favorable results, and how the organization might find greater value from training.

Recommendations for Further Research

The researcher recommends that further research be conducted to gain a greater understanding of what supervisors in typical organizational settings are doing to promote training transfer among their direct reports. With this in mind, the following suggestions should be considered:

1. Since one of the limitations of this current research is that it describes the experiences of supervisors in one functional area of one organization, opportunities for further research would include similar phenomenological research in other organizations, industries, and functional areas.

2. Similar research could be undertaken to determine whether other factors influence the ability of supervisors to promote training transfer. For example, research that segments study participants based on experience, educational level, and previous training might shed light on how certain practices are developed and executed.

3. Quantitative research using large populations across several organizations should be considered as a means of collaborating previous findings and

assessing the need for large-scale training interventions. An anonymous survey-based approach would also address the possibility that participants in qualitative studies might be giving socially desirable answers that do not accurately reflect their actual practice.

4. Since some of the participants in the current study reported a high level of effectiveness, research that takes into account the perspective of employees who are the recipients of coaching and other interventions would be helpful to form a more complete understanding of the phenomena. In other words, how do the employees' perceptions of these interactions differ from those of the manager? In short, are the managers as effective as they think they are? One proven way to address this area of study is through the use of multi-rater feedback and comparing the results with self-reported information.

Final Words

The researcher set out to understand the experiences and practices of supervisors endeavoring to promote training transfer in a typical organizational setting—the stories of real people living in the real world. Without controls or active interventions, the researcher wanted to get a sense for whether any of the best practices for promoting training transfer described in the scholarly and practitioner-oriented literature were being applied—even when there were no organizational expectations in place. The answer, he discovered, was sometimes yes and sometimes no. In fact, the lack of consistency among the study participants was one of the key findings of this research.

Does this mean that some of the study participants are bad supervisors or shirking their responsibilities? Clearly, the answer is no. All of the managers who participated in

the study meet or exceed company performance expectations, have long track records of success, and are respected by colleagues. Rather, in most cases, the managers who are not actively facilitating training transfer are likely not aware that there is a better way. They simply do not know what they do not know. As a result, organizational leaders and human resource development professionals must respond by establishing clear expectations, providing training for supervisors on how to promote training transfer, offering support and access to tools that could make the managers' work easier, and consistently assessing training to determine which employees are using new skills and knowledge and to what effect. Without this level of strategic involvement, we cannot expect anything more from frontline supervisors.

Accordingly, as this research concludes, it is only fitting to pay homage to the hardworking district and regional sales directors who participated in this project. All of them were busy and had many things they could have done with their time other than spend it talking with a doctoral candidate. Without exception, all of the managers were sincere and fully engaged in our conversations. Moreover, each of them expressed a sense of passion and commitment to the organization that made it clear to the researcher that these managers really wanted to be their best and bring out the best in others. It seems only reasonable then that they deserve the best efforts of those who are engaged in the practice of learning and development.

It is also reasonable to suggest that organizational leaders take the next step in creating clear expectations and provide training for managers around proven transfer promoting activities. When supervisors are trained appropriately and begin to take their rightful place as important influencers of training transfer, the organization should see

improved results. These results can and should be measured, but measurement should not

be limited to traditional approaches that solely involve quantitative measures. A more

productive approach might be the translation of case studies into stories that illustrate

vividly the value of embracing new approaches and applying new skills. With wide

publication of credible success cases, the potential for energizing the organization around

the value of learning will undoubtedly grow.

REFERENCES

Allen, M. (2002). What is a corporate university, and why should an organization have one. In M. Allen (Ed.), *The corporate university handbook: Designing, managing and growing a successful program* (pp. 1–12). New York: AMACOM.

Allen, M. (2007). Wisdom management: The missing link between learning and performance. In M. Allen (Ed.), *The next generation of corporate universities: Innovative approaches for developing people and expanding organizational capabilities* (pp. 389–402). San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

Amabile, T. M. (1995). *KEYS: Assessing the climate for creativity.* Greensboro, NC: The Center for Creative Leadership.

Anthony, P., & Norton, L. A. (1991). Link HR to corporate strategy. *Personnel Psychology, 7*(4), 75–86.

Awoniyi, E. A., Griego, O. V., & Morgan, G. A. (2002). Person–environment fit and transfer of training. *International Journal of Training and Development, 6*(1)*,* 25–35.

Axtell, C. M., Maitlis, S., & Yearta, S. K. (1997). Predicting immediate and longer-term transfer of training. *Personnel Review, 26*(3), 201–213.

Baldwin, T. T., & Ford, J. K. (1988). Transfer of training: A review and directions for future research. *Personnel Psychology, 41,* 63–105.

Bartel, A. P. (2000). Measuring the employer's return on investments in training: Evidence from the literature. *Industrial Relations, 39*(3), 502–524.

Bassi, L. J., & Van Buren, M. E. (1999). *The 1999 ASTD state of the industry report.* Alexandria, VA: American Society of Training and Development.

Bates, R. A., Holton, E. F., III, & Seyler, D. L. (1996). Validation of a transfer climate instrument. *Proceedings of the Academy of Human Resource Development, 18*(1), 426–433.

Biech, E. (Ed.). (2008). *ASTD handbook for workplace learning professionals.* Alexandria, VA: American Society of Training and Development.

Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2008). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A roadmap from beginning to end.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bower, G. H., & Hilgard, E. R. (1998). *Theories of learning* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Brinkerhoff, R. O. (2006). Increasing impact of training investments: An evaluation strategy for building organizational learning capability. *Industrial and Commercial Training, 38*(6), 302–307.

Brinkerhoff, R. O., & Jackson, G. (2003, October). Managing education to maximize impact. *Chief Learning Officer,* 20–31.

Brinkerhoff, R. O., & Montesino, M. U. (1995). Partnerships for training transfer: Lessons from a corporate study. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 6*(3), 263–274.

Brinkerhoff, R. O., & Mooney, T. P. (2008). Evaluating training programs. In E. Biech (Ed.), *The ASTD handbook for workplace learning professionals* (pp. 523–538). Alexandria, VA: ASTD Press.

Broad, M. L. (1982, May). Management actions to support transfer of training. *Training and Development Journal,* 124–130.

Broad, M. L., & Newstrom, J. W. (1992). *Transfer of training: Action-packed strategies to ensure high payoff from training investments.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2007). *Business research methods* (2nd ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Burke, L. A. (1997). Improving positive transfer: A test of relapse prevention training on transfer outcomes. *Human Resources Development Quarterly, 8*(2), 115–128.

Burke, L. A., & Hutchins, H. M. (2007). Training transfer: An integrative literature review. *Human Resource Development Review, 6,* 263–296.

Burton, W. H. (1963). Basic principles in a good teaching–learning situation. In L. D. Crow & A. Crow (Eds.), *Readings in human learning* (pp. 7–19). New York: McKay.

Campbell, J. P. (1971). Personnel training and development. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *22*, 565–602.

Chakiris, B., & Rolander, R. (1986) *Careers in training and development.* Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development.

Chiaburu, D. S., & Marinova, S. V. (2005). What predicts skill transfer? An exploratory study of goal orientation, training self-efficacy, and organizational support. *International Journal of Training and Development, 9*(2), 110–123.

Clarke, N. (2002). Job/work environment factors influencing training effectiveness within a human service agency: Some indicative support for Baldwin and Ford's transfer

climate construct. *International Journal of Training and Development, 6*(3), 146–162.

Cohen, D. J. (1990). What motivates trainees? *Training and Development Journal, 44*(11), 91–93.

Colaizzi, P. R. (1973). *Reflection and research in psychology.* Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cromwell, S. E., & Kolb, J. A. (2004). An examination of work-related factors affecting transfer of supervisory skills training to the workplace. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 15*(4), 449–470.

Crow, L. D., & Crow, A. (1963). *Readings in human learning.* New York: McKay.

Desimone, L. M., & Carlson-Le Floch, K. (2004). Are we asking the right questions? Using cognitive interviews to improve surveys in educational research. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 26*(1), 1–22.

Drucker, P. F. (1992, Fall). The post-capitalist world. *Public Interest, 109,* 89–100.

Facteau, J. D., Dobbins, G. H., Russell, J. E. A., Ladd, R. T., & Kudisch, J. D. (1995). The influence of general perception of the training environment on pretraining motivation and perceived training transfer. *Journal of Management, 21,* 1–25.

Ford, J. K. (1997). Advances in training research and practice: A historical perspective. In J. K. Ford (Ed.), *Improving training effectiveness in work organizations* (pp. 1–16). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Garavaglia, P. L. (1993, October). How to ensure transfer of training. *Training and Development,* 63–68.

Georgenson, D. L. (1982). The problem of transfer calls for partnership. *Training and Development Journal, 36,* 75–78.

Giorgi, A. (1997). The theory, practice, and evaluation of the phenomenological methods as a qualitative research procedure. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 28,* 235–281.

Goldstein, I. L. (1993). *Training in organizations.* Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Goleman, D. (1998). *Working with emotional intelligence.* New York: Bantam.

Gregoire, T. K., Propp, U. J., & Poertner, J. (1998). The supervisor's role in the transfer of training. *Administration of Social Work, 22,* 1–18.

Gumuseli, A. I., & Ergin, B. (2002). The manager's role in enhancing the transfer of training: A Turkish case study. *International Journal of Training and Development, 6*(2), 80–94.

Haggard, E. A. (1963). Learning a process of change. In L. D. Crow & A. Crow (Eds.), *Readings in human learning* (pp. 19–27). New York: McKay.

Heritage, J. (1984). *Garfinkel and ethnomethodology.* Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act, California Code 3560-3562.1 (1979).

Holton, E. F., III. (1996). The flawed four-level evaluation model. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 7*(1), 5–25.

Holton, E. F., III, Bates, R. A., & Ruona, W. E. A. (2000). Development of a generalized learning transfer system inventory. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 11,* 333–360.

Huczynski, A. A., & Lewis, J. W. (1980). An empirical study into the learning transfer process in management training. *Journal of Management Studies, 17*(3), 227–240.

Keen, E. (1975). *Doing research phenomenologically.* Unpublished manuscript, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA.

Kirkpatrick, D. L. (1967). Evaluation of training. In R. L. Craig & L. R. Bittel (Eds.), *Training and development handbook* (pp. 87–112). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Kirkpatrick, D. L. (1996a). Evaluation. In R. L. Craig (Ed.), *The ASTD training and development handbook* (4th ed.; pp. 294–312). Alexandria, VA: ASTD Press.

Kirkpatrick, D. L. (1996b). Revisiting Kirkpatrick's four-level model. *Training and Development, 50*(1), 54–57.

Kirkpatrick, D. L. (2008). Evaluating training programs. In E. Biech (Ed.), *The ASTD handbook for workplace learning professionals* (pp. 485–491). Alexandria, VA: ASTD Press.

Kirkpatrick, D. L., & Kirkpatrick, J. D. (2005). *Transferring learning to behavior: Using the four levels to improve performance.* San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Knowles, M. S., Holton, E. F., III, & Swanson, R. A. (2005). *The adult learner* (6th ed.). New York: Elsevier.

Kozlowski, S. W. J., & Salas, E. (1997). An organizational systems approach for the implementation and transfer of training. In J. K. Ford (Ed.), *Improving training effectiveness in work organizations* (pp. 247–287). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kraiger, K., Ford, J. K., & Salas, E. (1993). Application of cognitive, skill-based, and affective theories of learning outcomes to new methods of training evaluation. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 78,* 311–328.

Lim, D. H., & Johnson, S. D. (2002). Trainee perceptions of factors that influence learning transfer. *International Journal of Training and Development, 6*(1), 36–48.

London, M., & Moore, E. M. (1999). Continuous learning. In D. R. Ilgen & E. D. Pulakos (Eds.), *The changing nature of performance* (pp. 119–153). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Marlatt, G. A., & Gordon, J. R. (1980). Determinants of relapse: Implications for the maintenance of behavior change. In P. O. Davidson & S. M. Davidson (Eds.), *Behavioral medicine: Changing health life styles* (pp. 410–452). New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Marlatt, G. A. & Gordon, J. R. (1985). *Relapse prevention: Maintaining strategies in the treatment of addictive behaviors.* New York: Guilford Press.

Marshall, J. (1981). Making sense as a personal process. In P. Reason & J. Rowan (Eds.), *Human inquiry* (pp. 395–399). New York: Wiley.

Marx, R. D. (1982). Relapse prevention for managerial training: A model for maintenance of behavior change. *Academy of Management Review, 7*(3), 433–441.

Marx, R. D., & Karren, R. J. (1988, August). *The effects of relapse prevention training and interactive follow-up on positive transfer of training.* Paper presented at annual Academy of Management, Anaheim, CA.

McGehee, W. (1949). Training in industry. In W. Dennis (Ed.), *Current trends in industrial psychology* (pp. 84–114). Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2006). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry* (6th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Michalak, D. F. (1981, May). The neglected half of training. *Training and Development Journal,* 22–28.

Mio, J. S., Riggio, R. E., Levin, S., & Reese, R. (2005). Presidential leadership and charisma: The effects of metaphor. *The Leadership Quarterly, 16,* 287–294.

Mooney, T., & Brinkerhoff, R. O. (2008). *Courageous training: Bold actions for business results.* San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler Publishers.

Moustakas, C. E. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Newstrom, J. W. (1986). Leveraging management development through the management of transfer. *Journal of Management Development, 5*(5), 33–45.

Noe, R. A. (1986). Trainees' attributes and attitudes: Neglected influences on training effectiveness. *Academy of Management Review, 11,* 736–749.

Noe, R. A., & Schmitt, N. (1986). The influence of trainee attitudes on training effectiveness: Test of a model. *Personnel Psychology, 39,* 497–523.

Noe, R. A., Sears, J., & Fullenkamp, A. M. (1990). Relapse training: Does it influence trainees' post-training behavior and cognitive strategies? *Journal of Business and Psychology, 4*(3), 317–328.

Ormrod, J. E. (1995). *Human learning* (2nd ed.). Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Paradise, A. (2008, November). Investment in learning remains strong: The 2008 ASTD state of the industry report shows sustained support for corporate learning. *Training and Development, 62*(11), 45–51.

Pfeffer, J. (1994). *Competitive advantage through people: Unleashing the power of the workforce.* Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Phillips, J. (1996, February). ROI: The search for best practices. *Training and Development, 50*(2), 42–47.

Phillips, J. J. (1997). *Handbook of training evaluation and measurement methods* (3rd ed.). Houston, TX: Gulf.

Phillips, J. J. (2008). Return-on-investment. In E. Biech (Ed.), *ASTD handbook for workplace learning professionals.* (pp. 555–576). Alexandria, VA: ASTD Press.

Phillips, J. J., & Phillips, P. P. (2007). Next-generation evaluation: Searching for value. In M. Allen (Ed.), *The next generation of corporate universities: Innovative*

approaches for developing people and expanding organizational capabilities (pp. 129–164). San Francisco: Pfeiffer.

Phillips, P. P., & Phillips, J. J. (2007). *The value of learning: How organizations capture value and ROI and translate them into support, improvement, and funds*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1989). Phenomenological research methods. In R. S. Valle & S. Halling (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology* (pp. 41–60). New York: Plenum Press.

Quiñones, M. A., Ford, J. K., Sego, D. J., & Smith, E. M. (1995). The effects of individual transfer environment characteristics on the opportunity to perform trained tasks. *Training Research Journal, 1,* 29–48.

Richards, L., & Morse, J. M. (2007). *Users guide to qualitative methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Richman-Hirsch, W. L. (2001). Post-training interventions to enhance transfer: The moderating effects of work environments. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 12*, 105–120.

Robinson, D. G., & Robinson, J. C. (1985). Breaking barriers to skill transfer. *Training and Development Journal, 39*(1), 82–83.

Rossman, G. B., & Rallis, S. F. (2003). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rouillier, J. Z., & Goldstein, I. L. (1993). The relationship between organizational transfer climate and positive training transfer of training. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 4,* 377–390.

Saks, A. M., & Belcourt, M. (2006). An investigation of training activities and transfer training in organizations. *Human Resource Management, 45*(4), 629–648.

Salas, E., & Cannon-Bowers, J. A. (2001). The science of training: A decade of progress. *Annual Review of Psychology, 52,* 471–499.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Senge, P. M. (1990, Fall). The leader's new work: Building learning organizations. *Sloan Management Review, 32*(1), 7–23.

Smircich, L., & Morgan, G. (1982). Leadership: The management of meaning. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 18,* 257–273.

Smith-Jentsch, K. A., Jentsch, F. G., Payne, S. C., & Salas, E. (1996). Can pretraining experiences explain individual differences in learning? *Journal of Applied Psychology, 81*(1), 110–116.

Smith-Jentsch, K. A., Salas, E., & Brannick, M. T. (2001). To transfer or not to transfer? Investigating the combined efforts of trainee characteristics, team leader support, and team climate. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86,* 279–292.

Stevick, E. L. (1971). An empirical investigation of the experience of anger. In A. Giorgi (Ed.), *Psychology* (Vol. 1; pp. 132–148). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Stewart, T. A. (1997). *Intellectual capital: The new wealth of organizations.* New York: Doubleday.

Swanson, R. A. (1992). Demonstrating financial benefits to clients. In H. Stolovitch & E. Keeps (Eds.), *Handbook of human performance technology* (pp. 602–618). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Tannenbaum, S. I., & Yukl, G. (1992). Training and development in work organizations. *Annual Review of Psychology, 43,* 399–441.

Taylor, F. W. (1911). *The principles of scientific management.* New York: Harper & Row.

Terry, W. S. (2003). *Learning and memory* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Tough, A. (1979). *The adult's learning projects.* Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Tziner, A., Haccoun, R., & Kadish, A. (1991). Personal and situational characteristics influencing the effectiveness of training improvement strategies. *Journal of Occupational Psychology, 64,* 167–177.

Van Buren, M. E., & Erskine, W. (2002). *State of the industry 2002: ASTD's annual review of trends in employer-provided training in the United States.* Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development.

van der Klink, M., Gielen, E., & Nauta, C. (2001). Supervisory support as a major condition to enhance transfer. *International Journal of Training and Development, 5*(1), 52–63.

van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. London, Ontario, Canada: The University of Western Ontario.

Weiss, E., Huczynski, A. A., & Lewis, J. W. (1980). The superior's role in learning transfer. *Journal of European Industrial Training, 4*(4), 17–20.

Wexley, K. N., & Baldwin, T. T. (1986). Posttraining strategies for facilitating positive transfer: An empirical exploration. *Academy of Management Journal, 29,* 503–520.

Xiao, J. (1996). The relationship between organizational factors and the transfer of training in the electronics industry in Shenzhen, China. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 7*(1), 55–73.

Yamnill, S., & McLean, G. N. (2001). Theories supporting transfer of training. *Human Resources Development Quarterly, 12*(2), 195–206.

APPENDIX A

Researcher Bias

I have been employed by an arm of the organization that is the focus of this study

for nearly 19 years. For 15 of those 19 years, I was in management positions with direct

reports or in a training and development role in which I designed and delivered training. I

have also attended dozens of training classes throughout the years. Presently, I work in a

leadership development role and have daily contact with frontline leaders in the sales

organization. In this capacity, I influence a substantial portion of the budget associated

with management training for the organization.

Throughout my career, I have always enjoyed the training programs I attended

and considered most of them quite valuable during or shortly after the training event.

However, what I recognized was that I rarely applied any of these skills to my job and, as

a result, the new knowledge and skills quickly dissipated. The learning just did not stick.

I also noticed this phenomenon in my direct reports who also attended training on a

regular basis. With a few exceptions, most of my direct reports changed their daily

practice very little after returning from expensive training courses. Those who did try to

alter their behaviors had varying degrees of success. In most cases, these changes did not

last and they quickly relapsed into the old way of doing things. Many of my colleagues

seemed to have the same experience. All of this was very frustrating to me and seemed to

be a tremendously inefficient way of doing business.

I now believe that as a manager I could have done much more to help my direct

reports retain and apply the skills and knowledge acquired through training. I also believe

that if I had had managers who held me accountable for applying new skills or at a

140

minimum, had discussed the training I was going to attend or had just returned from with me on a consistent basis, I would have retained and applied much more of what I had learned. Unfortunately, I cannot recall any manager throughout the course of my career who diligently held me accountable for the application of concepts I learned in the training I attended at the company's expense.

For these reasons, I propose this study as a means to address this personal and professional frustration. I am sincerely curious about what supervisors are doing to affect training transfer and the reasons for their actions. I would like to know whether my experience is unique or typical in this organization. Further, I believe if we better understood what was really happening in the lives of supervisors, training and development professionals, as well as organizational executives, could more effectively address these issues and drive change. In short, I sincerely believe that we, as managers and supervisors, can do much better and that those who look to us for leadership deserve much better.

I enter this study with a base of experience that suggests that managers are doing very little to support training transfer. What I do not know is why they are not doing more. I believe that if I could uncover and present the current practices of these frontline supervisors, organizational executives and my peers in the training and development world would be in a better position to respond to whatever need exists—or does not exist—as the case may be.

APPENDIX B

Sample of Letter of Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Participant:

Principal Investigator: Michael L. Patterson, doctoral candidate, Graduate School of Education and Psychology, Pepperdine University, Los Angeles, CA.

Title of Project: An Examination of Supervisory Support as a Factor Affecting Training Transfer in a Sales Organization

1. I, _____, agree to participate in the research study being conducted by Michael L. Patterson under the direction of Mark Allen, Ph.D.

2. The overall purpose of this research is:

   To understand the lived experience of supervisors as they endeavor to facilitate training transfer for their direct reports within a pharmaceutical sales organization.

3. My participation will involve the following:

   I will participate in a face-to-face interview with the principal investigator lasting approximately 1 hour. During this interview, audio recordings will be made while I respond to questions about my experiences as a supervisor/manager.

4. My participation in the study will not extend beyond approximately 1 hour. The interview will be conducted at a mutually agreed upon location and at a mutually agreed upon time.

5. I understand that the possible benefits to my organization or society from this research are as follows:

   This study will provide insight on the degree to which front-line leaders are actively engaged in facilitating the transfer of training and will provide greater insight into the factors supervisors perceive as influencing their ability to influence training transfer. With increased knowledge in this area, learning and development professionals, as well as other organizational leaders, will have the ability to leverage training resources in ways that lead to better results.

6. I understand that there are certain risks and discomforts that might be associated with this research. These risks include providing personal opinions or identifiable information.

7. I understand that I may choose note to participate in this research.

8. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to participate and/or withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in the project or activity at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

9. I understand that the investigator will take all reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality of my records and my identity will not be revealed in any publication that may result from this project. The confidentiality of my records will be maintained in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. Under California law, there are exceptions to confidentiality, including suspicion that a child, elder, or dependent adult is being abused, or if an individual discloses an intent to harm him/herself or others.

10. I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact Mark Allen, Ph. D. at XXX-XXX-XXXX if I have questions or concerns about this research. If I have questions about my rights as a research participant, I understand that I can contact Doug Leigh, Ph. D., the Chairperson of the Graduate School of Education and Psychology's IRB, at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

11. I will be informed of any significant new findings developed during the course of my participation in this research which may have a bearing on my willingness to continue in this study.

12. I understand that in the event of physical injury resulting from the research procedures in which I am to participate, no form of compensation is available. Medical treatment may be provided at my own expense or at the expense of my health care insurer, which may or may not provide coverage. If I have questions, I should contact my insurer.

13. I understand to my satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have received a copy of this informed consent form, which I have read and understand. I hereby consent to participate in the research described above.

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____

Witness   Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the subject has consented to participate. Having explained and answered any questions, I am cosigning this form and accepting this person's consent.

_____   _____

Principal Investigator   Date

APPENDIX C

Invitation to Participate in Screening Interview

The following is the text of an email to go to potential study participants inviting them to participate in a brief screening interview.

Dear XXXXX,

I am doctoral candidate from Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology researching the experiences of district managers and regional sales directors in helping their direct reports apply what they learn in training classes on-the-job. I will gather my data by conducting one-on-one interviews lasting about 1 hour with several district and regional managers who meet established study criteria. All interviews will be conducted at locations and times convenient for all participants.

If you are selected to participate in the research, your identity will always remain confidential and you will be known only to me, the primary researcher. Please know that there are no consequences for choosing not to be part of the research or for not being selected to be part of the research. The primary benefits of participation are that you will be contributing to an important area of study and possibly contributing to the development of helpful practices that will assist other managers in this and other organizations.

If you are willing to be part of this research, I would like to have a very brief (approximately 5-10 minute) telephone conversation with you to discuss the criteria for participation. After I determine whether you meet the basic criteria, we will schedule a time and place to meet for our in-depth conversation.

Please respond to this email to let me know of your interest. In addition, please suggest a good time for us to have a brief telephone conversation and the best number for me to use to reach you.

Thank you for your consideration. Please call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX if you have any immediate questions.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Patterson
Principal Investigator / Doctoral Candidate
Graduate School of Education and Psychology
Pepperdine University

APPENDIX D

Screening Questionnaire

Date: _____ Time: _____ Interviewee-code:_____

The purpose of this research is to understand the experiences of supervisors (district and regional sales directors) as they attempt facilitate training transfer with their direct reports in this organization.

I am looking for the following characteristics in the participants in this study. I will read each criterion to you and ask that you indicate whether the criterion applies to you:

(Read each criterion to each potential participant and record responses.)

Criterion	Response
1. Are you currently employed by the subject pharmaceutical company? If so, how long?	
2. Are you currently serving as a district manager or a regional sales director?	
3. Have you had at least one direct report attend classroom based training events within the last year?	
4. Have you attended a classroom based training event in the last year?	
May I answer any further questions? Do you meet the requirements for the study? YES NO

If you are selected to participate in the study, it would involve an hour-long conversation at a mutually agreed upon location. I would like to record our conversation to ensure that your ideas are accurately captured. Do you have any concerns about an audio recording being made of our conversation? YES NO | |
| *If the potential study participant meets all of the criteria, indicate that I, as the researcher, would like to meet with him or her for an in-depth interview. Schedule a date, time, and location for the in-depth interview. Inform the participant that he or she will receive an informed consent form in the mail. Advise the participant to read the document carefully, sign it in front of a witness, and bring it with them to the face-to-face meeting.* | |

Interview Guide

Date: _____ Time: _____ Interviewee-code:_____

When the study participant arrives, begin with social conversation to create a comfortable and social atmosphere.

Opening the interview

As we begin today, I would like to thank you for agreeing to meet with me. As I mentioned previously, I am trying to understand the experience of managers in helping their direct reports apply what they learn in training to their jobs. This is simply a conversation about your experiences, so there are no wrong answers. I encourage you to respond honestly and comprehensively.

I would like to remind you that I am making an audio recording of our conversation today. I am also going to take notes. However, please know that your identity will be kept confidential and your responses to the questions will not be linked to you personally.

Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

General Questions

Try to remember times when you have had direct reports attend company sponsored training classes. It might help to think about a particular training program that your direct reports attended or think about a particular individual who attended some training. What were your thoughts and feelings when you heard that a direct report would be going to training? What actions do you routinely take if one of your direct reports will soon be attending training?

What part have you played traditionally in identifying what training your direct reports should attend? How might your feelings about the training or your actions with your direct reports been different if you had played a greater role in training decisions?

What sort of conversations did you have with your direct reports about their upcoming training? Where did these conversations typically occur? What did you talk about? What messages were you trying to communicate?

How did your direct reports seem to react to these conversations? What do you think were the outcomes of these conversations?

What barriers exist for not interacting with your direct reports about the training they are about to attend?

Describe any interaction you have with your direct reports while they were in the class? What did you discuss?

To what degree did you understand the learning objectives of any training classes your direct reports were attending and how the training might help them do a better job? If you did understand the learning objectives, how do you help make the course content relevant to their job?

After a direct report completed the training, describe the discussions you might have had about the training? Where did you hold these conversations? What particular goals did you have for these discussions? What was the result of these conversations?

How do you check to determine whether your direct reports are applying new skills they learned in training back on-the-job?

What do you do to help your direct reports practice or apply what they learn in training? How effective do you feel you have been in helping your direct reports apply what they learn in training on-the-job?

What factors, if any, prevent you from doing more to help your direct reports apply newly learned skills? What are the biggest inhibitors? Why?

When you have attended training yourself, what sort of interactions have you had with your managers about the training?

What have managers done to encourage you to practice or apply what you learn in work situations?

How satisfied are you with the support provided by your managers in the past?

What was the impact of this type of interaction with your manager?

Describe any organizational factors you might consider promoting or inhibiting the application of training? What sort of organizational or team issues help or hinder your application of newly acquired knowledge or skills on-the-job.

Closing the Interview

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for talking with me today. Your responses will be very helpful to this research.

APPENDIX F

Panel of Experts Providing Feedback on Interview Questions

Dennis Dressler—Mr. Dressler has been involved in organizational effectiveness and human resource development for the past 30 years. He is a senior consultant with Advantage Performance Group, serving a national and international client base. Mr. Dressler has authored numerous articles on developing and measuring the impact of learning. He completed doctoral studies in Human Resource Development at Western Michigan University.

Kristen Krebs, Ph.D—Dr. Krebs has more than 10 years of experience in human resources and employee development. She is presently the Associate Director of Professional Development for Cephalon, Inc., an international biopharmaceutical company located in Frazer, PA. Dr. Krebs completed her doctoral studies in industrial and organizational psychology at DePaul University in Chicago, IL.

Tim Mooney, M.A.—Mr. Mooney is a managing partner with the Advantage Performance Group, a wholly owned subsidiary of BTS Group AB. He is a seasoned performance consulting expert who specializes in assessment and organizational change. He works directly with clients on consulting projects, and is the practice leader for *The Advantage Way*™. Mr. Mooney is a frequent speaker and writer on the topic of achieving measurable business impact from training. He has recently coauthored a book with Dr. Robert Brinkerhoff, *Courageous Training,* which was released in June 2008. Mr. Mooney earned a B.A. degree in psychology from Butler University in Indianapolis and a M.A. degree in industrial and organizational psychology from the University of Akron.