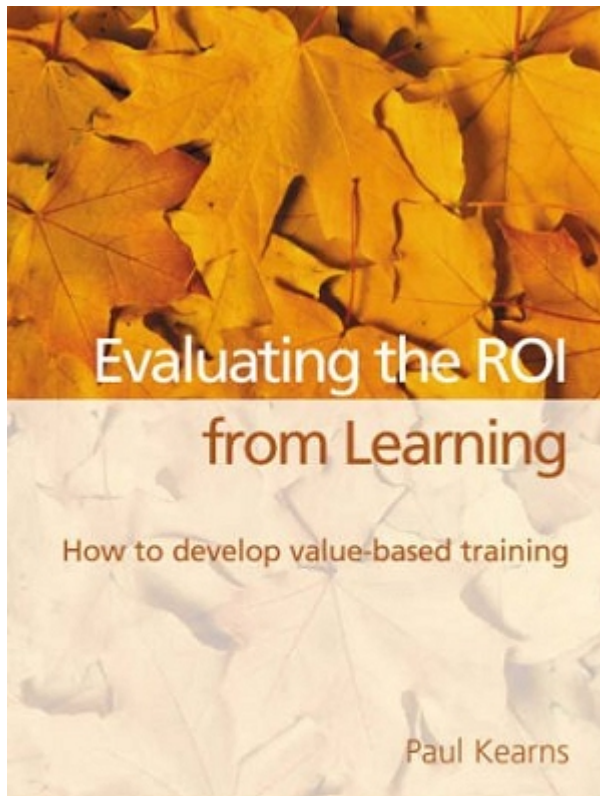


## "Evaluating the ROI from Learning" by Paul Kearns



This book addresses a major concern of many organizations, HR departments and trainers: how do I make sure that my training budget is spent in the right way?

In the introduction, Paul Kearns already shows what you can expect from the book. The sentence "Evaluation is a simple subject if you keep it simple" holds a promise that is kept in so far as the system suggested is much leaner than many others that pretend to work. However, another sentence from the introduction suggests, that it will not be a walk-over: "The only true measure for **evaluation** is always **value**". This is a concept that many people try to avoid when talking about learning, because value is much more difficult to know than, say, a number about the average trainee satisfaction.

However, all organizations must get used to the fact, that training is a business investment and that the decision to make this investment is as much a management decision as any other investment. You won't get a ROI-figure for the investment in some machinery without reasonably assuming certain parameters about your business and its environment and there will always be some risk in it.

Attributability of any success to training is as difficult as it is for marketing, research, product development etc. So, any decision is based and some uncertain information and the experience of the decision-maker. That's what management is all about. If you accept this fact, than this book shows you how to deal with learning on a value-based approach thus improving the performance of your organization as a whole.

In the first chapter the author establishes a learning maturity scale. He points out, how important it is to get beyond the first stages to stage three, where the organisation is able to deliver effective trainings due to a proper individual Training Needs Analysis (TNA). However, on the way to the learning organisation, the evaluation hurdle must be overcome. It is illustrated that only with effective evaluation the focus can switch from input (e.g. hours of training delivered) to output (business impact of learning) and the trainer can become a learning consultant. This is the basis for the development of a learning organisation.

Having stressed the importance of evaluation for the whole learning process, the author develops his system in the following chapters. A very important step is to put the business needs at the starting point of the training cycle.

With this in mind, the author develops his "Baseline, Added Value, Evaluation and Learning Model", which looks similar to the well-known model of Kirkpatrick but is quite different

through the emphasis of value. Basically, it consists of 5 levels:

- The baseline level, which establishes the expected value and the performance measures before the training.
- Three validation levels, containing what is often labelled as “evaluation”: measuring reactions (happy sheets), learning (tests) and application at work (feedback)
- The evaluation level

It is important to understand that it is very important to assess the training or other learning intervention before the training.

The author then discusses the concept of ROI and in part 2 presents a set of tools to support the whole training cycle. These tools are applied on various examples of learning interventions of different types.

So, what can you expect from the book?

If you want to get tools to report on happy sheets and the like more efficiently you will be disappointed. The same is true, if you expect the magic bullet to provide you with the 100% accurate ROI figure for any training automatically.

However, if you want to establish a learning process in your organisation, that is aimed at adding value, than you should read this book and observe its advice. The learning cycle and tools proposed here, will help your organization to learn how to learn in order to contribute to its business objectives.

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