

## Improving Learning Transfer: A Guide to Getting More Out of What You Put Into Your Training

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**C**yril Kirwan is both a practising management and organisation development consultant and a practising academic, as a visiting Academic Fellow at Henley Business School. The most effective training – and learning transfer – draws, as he would no doubt agree, on the best of theory and of practice.

Though his book is described on its back cover as a “highly practical book [that] will help trainers, development specialists and line managers ...”, the prospective reader should be aware that his academic background and practise is often the dominant flavour. While the typical line manager would learn greatly from reading it, its style might not sustain his interest.

Indeed, the line manager who would gain most, as Kirwan

### KEY

BOOK



CD/DVD/COMPUTER PROGRAM



GAMES



ONLINE



COURSES



OPEN LEARNING



### RATINGS GUIDE

OUTSTANDING ★★★★★  
VERY GOOD ★★★★★  
AVERAGE ★★★  
ADEQUATE ★★  
POOR ★

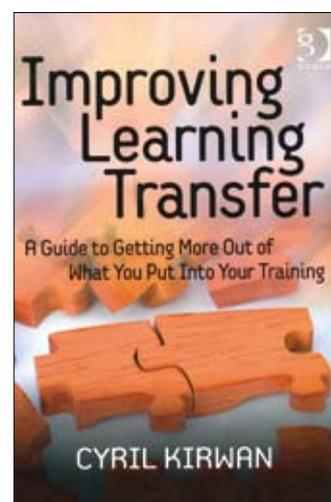
acknowledges, is the one most likely to look for a quick bullet list of recommendations – something this book does not provide.

To the author's credit, however, this is probably the book's biggest weakness. Between its covers is a comprehensive and thorough review of the very wide range of factors – from initial training design to the organisational culture to which the trainee returns – that influence the extent, duration and effectiveness of learning transfer.

The most obvious omission is the role that technology can now play in supporting the learner, especially on his return to the workplace.

Structured into a series of main chapters – focusing on thematic areas such as programme design and development, delivery, the individual learner, the organisational culture and framework, and likely resistance to change – the author explores the parallel and competing factors that influence the ultimate outcome. Existing models and frameworks are outlined and discussed, and each issue includes coverage of research and findings in evidencing the effectiveness of different strategies and the impact (positive or negative) of different factors that can come into play.

Although I have scored the book low for ‘innovation’, innovation is probably not the author's intention. While the phrase ‘review of the literature’ makes repeated appearances, the book reads more as a thorough guide and overview of work to date in all areas of learning transfer than as an attempt to promote an innovative or radically new approach. Kirwan is interested in exploring what has been seen to be effective rather than in untested, unproven methods.



# REVIEWS



Although a less ‘academic’ tone and greater use of tables and diagrams might make it a more approachable read – this is a book that rewards patience – it will provide a valuable point of reference for anyone looking to review L&D practice from top to toe. It may also serve them well in identifying possible shortcomings in the work of training designers, trainers, evaluators and managers that can be fruitfully addressed to reduce the number of hurdles that the learner must clear en route to improved, motivated and effective performance.

While the number of variables means there is no ‘magic bullet’, there is certainly plenty of ammunition here for those looking for ways to significantly improve learning transfer and the value of learning and development investment.

**DR ANTON FRANCKEISS**

CONTENT ★★★★★  
INNOVATION ★★  
CLARITY ★★★  
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★  
OVERALL RECOMMENDATION ★★★