

## Practical Usage of Four Levels of Kirkpatrick Model of Training Evaluation in Indian Companies

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### Abstract:

The very famous Kirkpatrick Model of training Evaluation, was invented by Donald Kirkpatrick in the year 1959. This is widely used training evaluation model worldwide. It includes four levels of the training evaluation. This model not only is useful for training evaluation but it also can be used for any kind of program evaluation. Such is the power of this model. E.g. it can be used for instructional design initiatives or any Organization Development initiatives. The four levels of the Kirkpatrick model of evaluation are as below:

Level 1: Reaction

Level 2: Learning

Level 3: Behavior

Level 4: Results.

It is interesting to note that as we go up from levels 1 to level 4, the evaluation keep becoming more & more difficult but the information we get keeps becoming more & useful as well as productive for the users.

It requires more & more specialized skills & experience to use & implement the upper levels of the model and this might be the reason that many professionals do not go till Level 3 & Level 4 completely. Many professionals & organizations go upto only Level 1 & Level 2. The other reasons why professionals refrain from using Level 3 & Level 4 is because these advanced levels are more & more time consuming, require huge amount of investment of time, efforts & ofcourse capital. This is the reason why this model does not give full benefit to the users as a result of model not getting implemented fully by the users.

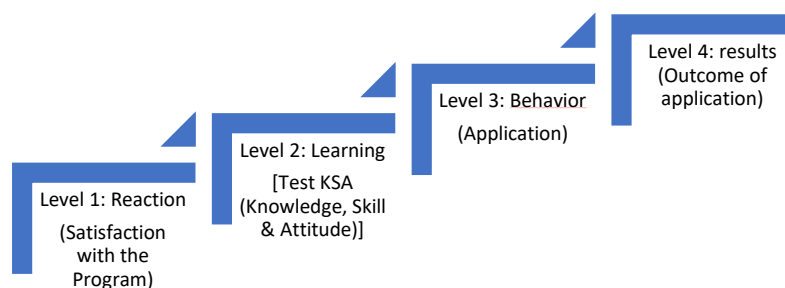
In this research the primary data is collected through questionnaire and telephonic Interviews. The Study will be beneficial to establish how much is the Kirkpatrick model is utilized by the training professionals on each level.

**Keywords:** Training, Evaluation, Kirkpatrick Model, Learning, Behavior

### Introduction

The Kirkpatrick Model is internationally acclaimed & widely used model for evaluating impact of training and other programs. It consists of four levels of evaluation: Reaction, Learning, Behavior, and Results.

**Fig. 1: Kirkpatrick Four-Level Framework**



### **Literature Review**

The very famous Kirkpatrick Model of training Evaluation, was invented by Donald Kirkpatrick in the year 1959. This is widely used training evaluation model worldwide. It includes four levels of the training evaluation. This model not only is useful for training evaluation but it also can be used for any kind of program evaluation. Such is the power of this model. E.g. it can be used for instructional design initiatives or any Organization Development initiatives. The four levels of the Kirkpatrick model of evaluation are as below:

Level 1: Reaction

Level 2: Learning

Level 3: Behavior

Level 4: Results

This model on each of the above levels collects the data and then analyse the same to find out immediate benefits and also benefits in the long run.

This model appears to be extremely simple to understand but when you try to implement and practically start using the same; you realize that it's not that easy and it keeps getting complicated going up the levels. It's been over 60 years since this model was initially given Donald Kirkpatrick; now his son also is taking the legacy ahead & guides on the model by his literary work. Even after so many decades this model still has all the relevance and actually most widely used training evaluation model worldwide.

The Kirkpatrick model actually works by breaking down the entire training/program process into four different levels to evaluate the effect of the program on each level and also study how the program is actually impacting the learning outcomes pre-decided for the program.

### **The Four Levels of the Kirkpatrick Model**

It is interesting to note that as we go up from levels 1 to level 4, the evaluation keeps becoming more & more difficult but the information we get keeps becoming more & useful as well as productive for the users.

It requires more & more specialized skills & experience to use & implement the upper levels of the model and this might be the reason that many professionals do not go till Level 3 & Level 4 completely. Many professionals & organizations go up to only Level 1 & Level 2. The other reasons why professionals refrain from using Level 3 & Level 4 is because these advanced levels are more & more time consuming, require huge amount of investment of time, efforts & of course capital. This is the reason why this model does not give full benefit to the users as a result of model not getting implemented fully by the users.

The International Society for Educational Technology mentions that those who use the Kirkpatrick Model of training evaluation may not progress beyond the second level due to the required time investment or budgetary constraints.

Below is the coverage of all 4 levels and how they build upon each other.

#### **Level 1: Reaction**

Donald Kirkpatrick defines that the 1<sup>st</sup> level of any program evaluation is how the participants give their 1<sup>st</sup> hand immediate response/feedback on the program that whether the program is up to their expectations in terms of being engaging, relevant and of their interest level. The professionals for this level of evaluation gives feedback forms towards the end of the program immediately or on emails now days generally immediately after the end of the session.

In this feedback generally it is asked how the participants rates the program overall, program's content, relevance/ usefulness in their daily job, trainer's skills and general things like training venue, facilities etc.

This is the level on which we have to expend the least in terms of investment of time, efforts etc. Also it's the most easy to get the reaction through feedback forms on the programs at this level. But at the same time the

information we get from this level is very basic and does not critically evaluate how the learning transformation was done and till what level the learning objectives were fulfilled.

For such insights we will have to move to the next levels of the model.

### **Level 2: Learning**

This level finds out that whether the participant has learnt the concepts, acquired the knowledge or skills on which he/she was trained. Through this level the L&D Professional can find out that whether the participant has faced any difficulty or getting stuck in learning any area or particular topics etc. Through this level the trainer can also modify his/her content for the audience basis the challenges in learning shown in this level, so the content can be better for the next participants.

Level 2 of learning is implemented by the way of quizzes, assessments of the learnings generally immediately or after certain time period. It is also common in this level to conduct pre training and post training assessments; so that the both can be compared & the impact can be seen.

The L&D professional also ascertain through this level that whether to certify the participant or declare him passing a particular level of learnings/skills.

### **Level 3: Behavior**

Now after the Level 1 & Level 2 the advanced level of Kirkpatrick evaluation model is of Behavior. In this level it is evaluated that whether the training was useful in changing the behavior of the participant or not? This is because even if feedback given by participant was good on Level 1 & also participant passed the Level 2 of Learning but it is of no use if the behavior itself of the participant has not changed in day to day life. E.g. Mr. A was trained on effective negotiation skills. Mr. A gave good feedback on level 1 & also passed test on level 2 but it is observed that Mr. A is not implementing the learnings on the job & as a result there is no change in his behavior on the job & his negotiation skills are as it was before the training.

It is however not easy to implement Level 3 in practical scenario, because it is to be found out that learnings are being used day to day by each & every participant & is it changing their behavior on the job as per expectation of the training. Generally after the training ALP (Action Learning Plan) is given by the trainer to all participants & participants are supposed to follow the same on job to implement the learning & bring behavior change.

It is generally done in level to ascertain behavior change that observation of the participant, interview of supervisor/manager, colleagues etc. is taken and analyzed if the behavior change has taken place or not. Kind of 360 degree feedback is also a trend to do at this level.

So by this level the behavior change in learner is ascertained but if we want to learn that if overall on the organization has this impacted; so we will have to move to next level.

### **Level 4: Results**

This level 4 of Kirkpatrick model actually is helpful in finding out if the program was useful as a whole for the organization. As explained earlier as we progress up the levels ; the complexity or difficulty in implementation increases but the benefits also increases for the organization. This level measures if there is any positive change in productivity, time taken for a task, sales etc. overall after the program. Return on investment (ROI) is also calculated on this level for the same purpose.

This final level is the most difficult and challenging to implement in real life scenario, as it requires a significant investment of time, effort and money to accurately measure results. If we are successful in implementing this level then the efficacy of the program & learnings can be easily ascertained. We can also get the way forward plan if the results are not so good as per expectation.

### **Benefits & Challenges Of The Kirkpatrick Model**

Kirkpatrick evaluation model is still used worldwide even after more than 6 decades of its invention. This is because of its clear benefits:

- It gives a clear, simple-to-follow process that breaks up an analysis & evaluation into manageable steps.
- It works with both physical and digital learning programs (LMS), whether in-person or online.
- It is a highly flexible and adaptable model, making it very easy to implement across the industries for any program.
- It gives the organization all the insights & information for the efficacy of the program & success of the same

However, there are also some challenges and concerns also in the Kirkpatrick Model:

- It is very difficult to implement the Level 3 & Level 4 for all programs as it requires lot of time, efforts & also money investment to implement these higher levels.
- There may be lot of other factors both internal & external which may be responsible for the change in productivity or sales or factor being measured by Kirkpatrick model of evaluation; so it is further more difficult to prove the change has been solely because of the training program.
- Level 3 & level 4 even if measured than also it is told that it is only postmortem; because this model can not do anything about the program which is ongoing. This is because it ll evaluate program only after its completed.

### **Statement Of The Problem**

Training professionals are aware about the Kirkpatrick model of training evaluation but all the levels are not optimally utilized due to various reasons of time & budgets especially in India. In India the training budgets are itself very small; than to expend more in evaluation of program becomes even more difficult. Here to be noted that each level is important to evaluate & gives the organization different insights for the program. So, in this research paper we are trying to analyze this utility of the model by professionals in various companies in India.

### **Scope Of The Study**

The scope of this study is limited to Indian companies implementing the training programs for the employees at various levels in the organization and also use Kirkpatrick model of training evaluation at various levels.

### **Objectives**

- a. Study all four level of Kirkpatrick model & evaluate their usage in Indian companies.
- b. Analyze the challenges & dimensions from the professionals who use Kirkpatrick model of training evaluation in India.
- c. Descriptively highlight the trends of usage of all four levels of the Kirkpatrick evaluation model.

### **Research Methodology**

The study attempts to explain the amount & degree of usage of Kirkpatrick model at all 4 levels by training professionals and also to find out various challenges faced by them when using the Kirkpatrick model of training evaluation. Random Sampling was used to collect the data from the training professionals & employees working in companies across India. The sample size was 30. Structured questionnaire was designed to collect the primary data from the training professionals & employees through telephone calls & physical forms. Secondary Data was collected from, internet journals and text books.

### **Analysis And Interpretation**

**Table 1: Level 1 (REACTION) Practices:**

| <b>Mode of collection of data</b> | <b>%</b> |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Offline                           | 57.69    |
| Online                            | 22.12    |
| Both                              | 20.19    |

| Time frame                      |       |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| At the end of the program       | 92.31 |
| After a few days of the program | 4.81  |
| Both                            | 2.88  |

**Table 2: Level 1 Practices; Action plans**

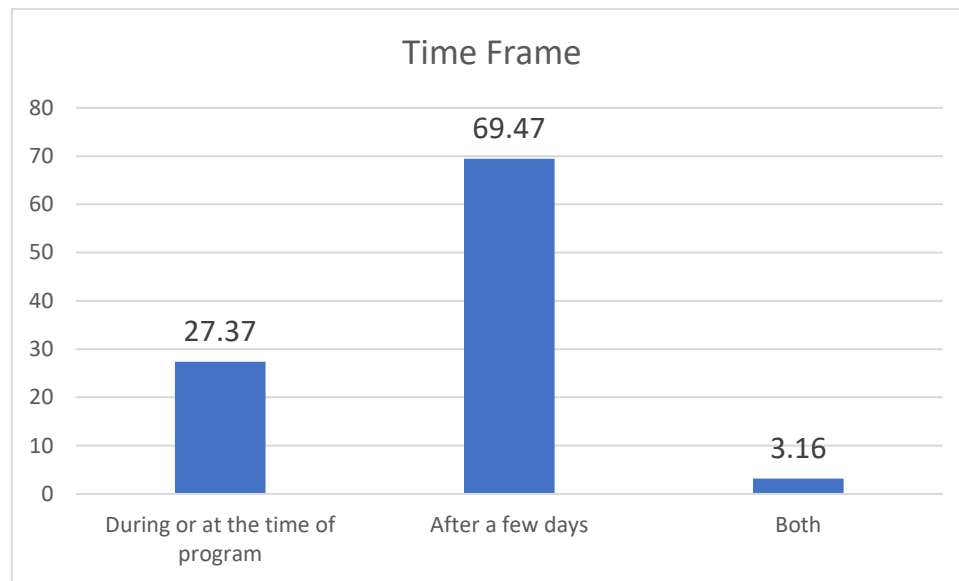
| Level 1 Practices: Action Plans          |       |
|------------------------------------------|-------|
| Action plans                             | %     |
| Organizations which collect action plans | 75.96 |
|                                          |       |
| Uses of action plans                     |       |
| To guide application                     | 83.54 |
| To link with actual application          | 77.22 |
| To support application of skills learned | 56.96 |
| To gain commitment to action plans       | 18.99 |

**Level 1 Practices: Challenges**

- Inaccurate and incomplete data given by the participants.
- Participants don't take feedback session seriously.
- Participants don't understand the questions

**Table 3: Level 2 (LEARNING) Practices:**

| Learning Assessment                            | %     |
|------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Organization which conduct learning assessment | 91.35 |
|                                                |       |
| Methods of assessment                          | %     |
| Performance of actual piece of work            | 66.32 |
| Written tests                                  | 63.16 |
| Simulation                                     | 50.53 |
| Assignment/project                             | 30.53 |
| Face-to-face oral test                         | 16.84 |
| Learning paper submission                      | 25.26 |
| Questionnaire survey                           | 6.32  |

**Fig 2: Time Frame of Assessment:****Level 2 Practices: Challenges**

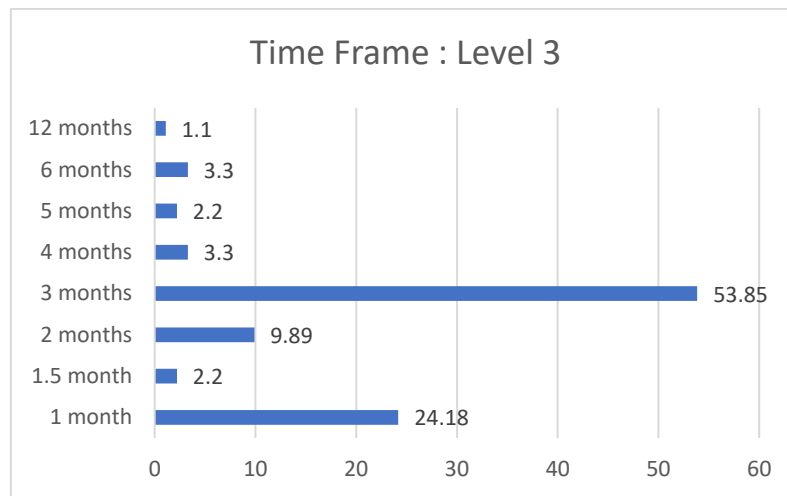
- Time, facilities and other resources constraints
- Line manager who conduct programs are reluctant to help in this process.
- Changes in business priorities
- Non availability of participants for pretesting
- Monitoring the written test or practical test is becoming difficult

**Table 4: Level 3 and 4 (APPLICATION & BUSINESS RESULTS) Practices:**

| Level 3 Practices: Methods                             |      |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Job Application                                        | %    |
| Organizations which conduct Job application evaluation | 87.5 |

| Methods                                    | %     |
|--------------------------------------------|-------|
| Questionnaire to participants              | 57.14 |
| Questionnaire to participants' Supervisors | 49.45 |
| Performance monitoring                     | 43.96 |
| Observation                                | 43.96 |
| Comparison of pre and post training        | 41.76 |
| Interview with participants                | 32.97 |
| Benchmarking with action plans             | 26.37 |
| Follow up sessions                         | 26.37 |
| Focus group discussions                    | 23.08 |
| Project assignments                        | 9.89  |

Fig 3: Level 3 Practices: Time Frame

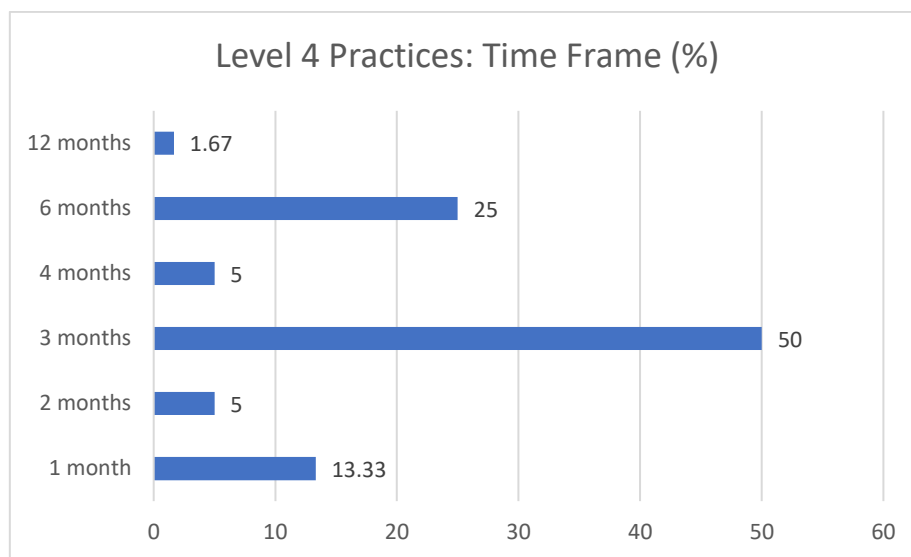
**Level 3 Practices: Challenges**

- People & Resources' constraints.
- Lack of support from the participants' managers and participants
- Not practically possible to implement whatever is taught in the program
- Superiors are biased in favor of the trainee, which results in getting inflated information about application of inputs
- No interest to implement new learning
- Conditions are not favorable
- No support from participants' managers
- No obligation and no reward

Table 5: Level 4 practices: Methods:

| Level 4 Practices: Methods                         |       |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Business Results                                   | %     |
| Organizations which evaluate business results      | 57.69 |
| <b>Methods to assess business results</b>          |       |
| Performance records                                | 86.67 |
| Comparison of pre and post data                    | 61.67 |
| Questionnaire to participants' supervisors         | 60    |
| Questionnaire to participants                      | 46.67 |
| Benchmarking with action plans                     | 40    |
| Interview with participants                        | 35    |
| Verbal feedback from the participants' supervisors | 6.67  |
| Client feedback                                    | 6.67  |

Fig 4: Level 4 Practices: Time Frame



#### Level 4 Practices: Challenges

- Time & resources constraints
- Gaining commitment from business managers.
- Choosing appropriate method of data collection.
- Improper data collected
- External factors and last-minute changes in the overall organizational strategy

#### Conclusion

Kirkpatrick Level 1 & 2 on evaluation are being followed more & more commonly than Level 3 & 4. As the level of evaluation goes up the challenges to use them as well as usage is reduced. This is because of complexity of using higher levels like Level 3 & Level 4. If we see from an organization standpoint all the levels are extremely critical & also level 3 & 4 could prove to be more vital in terms of future planning and resource mobilization. There is a great need to encourage the training professionals to use all four level so training evaluation by equipping them with all the knowhow and training required to use the globally accepted Kirkpatrick model of training evaluation. The model is known by almost all training professionals as basic knowledge subject but they also have to be more & more aware on practically how to use this model in their training programs which they are running in their companies.

#### References

- [1] Kirkpatrick D & Kirkpatrick W (2016) - Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Training Evaluation
- [2] Peck D (2023) - Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Training Evaluation
- [3] Woodgate S. (2023) – Using Kirkpatrick Model of Training Evaluation