Full Length Research Article

IMPACT OF BEHAVIORAL TRAINING PROGRAM ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE – TO BE MEASURED THROUGHDR.KIRKPATRICK MODEL WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ORGANIZATION - AUTOMOTIVE RESEARCH ASSOCIATION OF INDIA, PUNE, (INDIA)

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ABSTRACT

Behavioral Training and Business Performance Relationship: The success of an organization is logically linked to the actions of its people in right direction at right degree. In today's global competitive environment only performing yesterday's action (s) has no assurance of success and its people need to constantly reinvent the wheel in order to stay ahead of its competition. In other words it is the learning organizations that can create and maintain the right culture of continuous learning for its people to strive best. Post globalization policy being adopted by Indian Govt., Human Resources and Training Department have been making investment in its people through various training and development initiatives with a hope that it will reap them multifold benefits in future. However, unless these initiatives are being properly tracked and measured it is difficult for top brace of the organization to ascertain the effectiveness of its training and development program. This research is intended to measure the impact of behavioral / soft skills training provided across the organization at different hierarchy on business performance.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to empirically investigate the impact of soft skills training programs and learning on employee's overall performance at work place. Since training programs always have the objective of individual behavioural change; it is very essential to measure the actual performance improvement caused by specific training programs. In other words this paper intend to measure the soft skills training ROI since companies spend humongous energy, time and money to ensure all employees go through various training may be technical or behavioural in nature and hence, it is paramount important for them to analysis and understand to measure the Return on Investment (ROI). For the purpose, the researcher used Dr.Kirkpatrickmodel of evaluating soft skills training on four parameters like Reaction, Learning, Behavioural Change and Result achievement.

Objectives of the research paper

Objectives

- To study and analyze if behavioral training programs bring skills improvement for employees if measured systematically.
- To study and understand the impact of behavioral training program (s) on employees performance and thereby improving the business result for the Organization.

Literature Review

Measuring effectiveness of behavioral training has been the challenge in most of the organizations as compare to technical based training. Managers and employees attend numerous soft skills related training programs and organizations as well invest huge resources in terms of funding, time and energy etc. However, unless the organizations have equally equipped systems in place which can measure the effectiveness, the investment that was made gets into various questions from different stakeholders. In measuring the efficacy of soft skills

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training, action learning is one of the most widely used interventions for developing organizations and leadership (O'Neil and Marsick, 2007; Raelin, 2009). In the context of management training and development, measuring impact of learning projects (ALPs) have become apopular part of program design. Real business challenges are used as the basis for learning by means of team reflection. If the training measurement and learning, behavior change and result is balanced, behavioral training can have a positive impact upon the organization investing in the learning and development as shown by Dr. Donolod Kirkpatrick (the famous Kirkpatrick model of measuring training efficacy). However, thepotential organizational impact of behavioral training has not really been addressed from the perspective of those participating in management development programs. In this research paper, we discuss what conditions for organization-wide learning can be created to better reveal the potential of behavioral based training and development programs. Revans (1982) argued that the greatest challenge in action learning is to balance action and learning to deliver organizational impact. Balanced action learning within the context of management development / behavioral training is argued to be a powerful engine for human resource development (HRD) (Reynolds and Vince, 2004; Vince, 2004; Willmott, 1994). Cho and Egan (2010) claimed that action without learning is unlikely to provide fruitful longer term results, and learning without action does not facilitate change in the organization. Although Revans' work on action learning emphasized the more social aspects of learning and action, the conceptual focus of later studies has been increasingly upon the individual and has not adequately explored how the socially situated nature of learning and action within the organization will affect its organizational impact.

Although Revans has long been viewed as the most important contributor to action learning theory and practice, the research does not provide an agreed definition olfaction learning (Marsickand O'Neil, 1999). Despite this, however, there seems to be some agreement that the key ingredient is a focus on *real* work-based (or community-based) problems. Included here is learning from experience through team reflections to gain new insights and resolve perceived problems. Another area of agreement seems to be the need to balance action and learning, both conceptually and in practice, in order to unleash the potential for problem solving. Action without learning is unlikely to returnlong-term results, and learning without action does not facilitate real change (Cho and Egan, 2010). Marsick and O'Neil (1999) claimed that all action learning is practiced collaboratively with others through some form of action research, and all approaches are philosophy rooted in theories of learning from experience.

An underlying assumption is that human beings can shape their environment by learning from experience. Experience, on the other hand, needs to be understood as framed by social contexts. Action learningis rooted in the work of the progressive educationalist Dewey (1980) and the social psychologist Lewin (1951). Although some scholars draw eclectically on additional theories, action learning has come to be dominated by a pragmatic focus on learning for the sake of more instrumental problem solving (Marsick and O'Neil, 1999). The aim of action learning is to develop individuals'

and organizations' capacity to learn, that is, to learn how to learn. Marsick and O'Neil make a distinction between three schools of action learning: scientific, experiential and critical reflection. We find the experiential school useful for the present study because of its philosophical basis in action research and Kolb's (1984) learning theory. The purpose of experiential action learning is to understand and change oneself within a system through action and reflection on action. The depth of change is instrumental, intrapersonal and interpersonal and is based on raising awareness and developing the capacity to change tacit practice. The rationale of the approach is making meaning from experience through cycles of problem framing, action, reflection on action, concluding and reframing. According to Marsick and O'Neil (1999), the organizational risk is the need for management support at various levels. For action learning programs, O'Neil (1997) identified tensions between the expectations of learning and the delivery of tangible results, between the time required for learning and the tasks to be undertaken and between team conflict and harmony. Marsick and O'Neil (1999) also claimed that participants might be disturbed by the discrepancy between what they are learning inaction learning programs and the ways in which their organization functions.

This indicates that the balance between learning and action is important when it comes to organizational impact. In a review of behavioral learning research, Cho and Egan (2010) pointed out that although action learning is frequently considered a strategy for organizational change, it appears most often in a manner directed towards individual learning and personal development. The balance between action and learning was addressed by categorizing the selected research as follows: action-oriented (three studies), learning-oriented (24), balanced (20) and other (three). The dominance of learning oriented studies can be explained by the number of learning-oriented action learning programs carried out in the UK and elsewhere in Europe, where there is a strong tradition for action learning as an approach to personal development (Cho and Egan, 2010). This supports claims that action learning has become focused on personal development and rather than on organizational issues or organizational development. Research falling within the category balanced action learning tended to focus both on learning and the task at hand. This category of research also included projects focusing on reflective practices and organizational learning.

Depending on the nature of the intervention, the focus of the assessment can be changed at an individual, a team or a system level. Many programs emphasize that the learning is more important than the actual results and that action learning provides a safe environment to learn from mistakes. Previous studies indicate that action learning is successful when assessed according to measures of individual learning and personal growth and directed less at organizational learning and development (Pedler *et al.*, 2005; Vince, 2004). A number of more general studies of training and development show a lack of impact on the organization from individual learning and several key factors to enhance transfer have been identified (Burke and Hutchins, 2007; Holton and Baldwin, 2003; Tannenbaum and Yukl, 1992). This literature is often based on an assumption that organizational impact can in fact be achieved through individual learning, and although much of

the evidence supports this (Nilsson, 2010), it is not always the case, not least because of the 'transfer problem' (Grossman and Salas, 2011). The literature is helpful in understanding the complexity of transfer, and our results emphasize the role of collaborative aspects of ALPs in achieving transfer.

Studies of management training and development emphasize the experience-based as well as the social and reflexive nature of managerial learning in management development programs (Blackler and Kennedy, 2004; Gosling and Mintzberg, 2006; Mintzberg, 2004a,b; Reynolds and Vince, 2007). Team reflection is also important for ALPs in management development. In studies of how to make training and development more successful, the organizational learning environment is one of the key factors (Belling *et al*., 2004; Marsick and Watkins, 2003). When it comes to implementing action learning efforts to improve the organization, De Loo (2006) argued that HRD practitioners need knowledge about organizational-level development and change to enhance individual learning.

This review supports the claim that management development programs tend to be more oriented towards individual learning and much of the research is developed from a position where the focus is on linking individual learning to organizational impact. However, the rhetoric seems unwarranted in light of the results, and the narrow concern with translating individual learning into organizational impact might have blinded us to mediating conditions within the managers' own organization. Besides framing action learning as a question of finding the balance between action and learning at the individual level, there is a need to trace empirically how conditions within a manager's organization can explain the disparate impact of ALPs. Arguably, this could be seen as part of the wider 'transfer problem', which has generated a large literature within the training and development field: what factors allow the skills and knowledge flowing from an individual's training and development to be used in practice to benefit the organization (see Grossman and Salas, 2011).

the participating organizations. The 58 participants in the particular cohort under study came from different department and the study included regular interaction with program participants over a time period of ten months. This yielded much empirical material. The analysis of the managers' experiences of the organizational impact of their Action Learning Program led us to inquire more deeply into the ways the Alp's were implemented and with what effect. The article begins with a review of key action learning perspectives and focuses particularly on the relationship between action and learning as a key factor in the organizational impact of ALPs. We identify what we see as open questions in the literature.

After a brief overview of the research design, we offer two sets of descriptive analyses. The first group of managers reflects on what they perceive as a lack of organizational impact from ALPs. We then turn to empirical examples from managers who have completed what turned out to be projects that had greater impact. Based on managers' reflections on the conditions important for organizational impact, we extend the debate on balanced ALPs by incorporating practical concerns about ensuring that learning and action are collaborative endeavors within the manager's organization. Based on these findings, we point to the practical implications of our work.

Research Design

Research Type

The type of research is descriptive research, wherein the information on Soft Skills Training Program that influence team and individual team members to perform best of their ability. The research also critically analyses the team / individual team members' performance.

Universe of Study

The sampling universe consists of all Indian as well as MNC tier 1 and tier 2 IT companies who have their development center in Pune.

Dr. Kirkpatrick Model of Behavioral Training measurement at four levels

level	evaluation type (what is measured)	evaluation description and characteristics	examples of evaluation tools and methods	relevance and practicability
1	Reaction	Reaction evaluation is how the delegates felt about the training or learning experience.	'Happy sheets', feedback forms. Verbal reaction, post-training surveys or questionnaires.	Quick and very easy to obtain. Not expensive to gather or to analyses.
2	Learning	Learning evaluation is the measurement of the increase in knowledge - before and after.	Typically assessments or tests before and after the training. Interview or observation can also be used.	Relatively simple to set up; clear-cut for quantifiable skills. Less easy for complex learning.
3	Behavior	Behavior evaluation is the extent of applied learning back on the job - implementation.	Observation and interview over time are required to assess change, relevance of change, and sustainability of change.	Measurement of behavior change typically requires cooperation and skill of line-managers.
4	Results	Results evaluation is the effect on the business or environment by the trainee.	Measures are already in place via normal management systems and reporting - the challenge is to relate to the trainee.	Individually not difficult; unlike whole organization. Process must attribute clear accountabilities.

Research Outline

In our study, we investigated 58 (Fifty Eight) employees of Automotive Research Association of India, Pune. (https://www.araiindia.com) who had attended varied soft skills / behavioral training in last one year as an important part of the programmed activities. It was believed to add value to

Sample Frame: Sample Frame consists of List of Operations (Project) Managers who are responsible for managing team. Sample Frame also covers the Team who is reporting to Operations Managers.

Sample Size – 58 Employees including Managers and their immediate reporting team were part of research program.

Method of Study

The study will be based on Dr. Kirkpatrick model of measuring soft skills trainings as follows -

A sample survey was conducted at Team Level and personal interview (at Manager and reporting team level). Following sampling methods is used: Convenience / Non – probability Sampling

Survey was sent to those respondents who had spent minimum one year tenure with the reporting Manager Three teams were selected in the company. For all the teams employees joined and left the organization in last year were not considered.

Data Collection

Primary Data Collection

Personal or Telephone Interview

Formal Interview

Operations Managers from Automotive Research Association of India, Pune and employees at different career / grade were interviewed to get the in depth understanding of training programs they have attended and impact of the same on their day to day work.

Questionnaire

A set of questions (Survey Questionnaire based on Dr. Kirkpatrick behavioral training model) were mailed to respondents on excel to targeted employees to get the required information about impact of various training program they have attended in last one year and its impact on their performance. The said feedback was conducted at two levels – first it is the self-assessment (feedback and assessment by Employees) and the second from their immediate Manager.

Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data can be collected through company websites, manuals, research papers, company's annual statements, etc.

Data presentation and analysis

The data is presented in tabular or graphical form including ratios and descriptive statistics.

Following Steps followed during the research study

Step 1] The research started with interviewing Operations Managers and employees of Automotive Research Association of India, Pune. (https://www.araiindia.com) in Pune region on understanding of various training programs they have conducted in last one year. The list of the employees reporting to manager was collected based on tenure i.e. the employee should have worked under the same Manager for more than one year and who is currently working with the Organization.

Step 2] Post the interviews, the selected set of employees were given set of questionnaire to respond, which was based on Dr. Kirkpatrick behavioral training model of Reaction, Learning, and Behavioral Change and Result achievement.

Step 3] In the research, the researcher tried to analyze the impact of the various behavioral training programs that the selected group of employees had undergone and the impact of all these soft skills programs at four level as per Dr. Kirkpatrick behavioral training model of Reaction, Learning, and Behavioral Change and Result achievement. The Research had developed separate set of questionnaires at Reaction, Learning, and Behavioral Change and Result achievement level to measure training effectiveness.

Step 4] Finally understand and analyses the impact of behavioral training individual's performance and business unit performance.

Matrix used for evaluating Business Unite Performance

A) Timely Delivery (for Production related employees)

- Project Planning was developed in advance with clear time frame
- Client has accepted and Sign off the said Project Plan
- All required Test and Quality checks were conducted before final release to Client
- Every project Release was done as per project planning and no rework was required to do post final project release
- Project was designed keeping in mind PMP (Project Management Professional) guidelines
- All Team Members and Project Manager were given PMP orientation training

Customer Satisfaction Survey (for all Department External or Internal Customer)

C - SAT Survey (Customer Satisfaction Survey) was conducted twice in year on following parameter (On scale of 1 to 10 points - Excellent towards 10)

- Quality of Delivery
- Timeliness in Releases (Project Delivery)
- Turnaround time for Client Queries
- Understanding of Client Business and integration of developed Software as per need of Business
- Cost / Benefit Analysis from Client Perspective

Percentage of Deviation from agreed Quality Standards

- Number of times Project was deviated from Agreed Quality Standards on every release (Project delivery)
- Number of rework required to be done before quality check.

Lead Generation or Lead Conversation (for Sales / Marketing Dept.)

- Number of leads generated post training for sales/ marketing persons.
- Number of leads converted into actual business
- Margins at which Business Leads were closed

Data Analysis

Learning (Level 2.00 Parameter based on Dr. Kirkpatrick model)

Figure – 1.00 (Employee's Self Feedback post six months attending the training on Learning parameter based on Dr. Kirkpatrick model)

program that they have attended certain learning has been acquired which was validated through various critical incidents observed by Manager. The feedback shared by Manager as well as employees themselves shows that learning acquired through training has helped them performed better in their work place since the Subject knowledge and Solving problem for other team members has been observed in last tem months period.
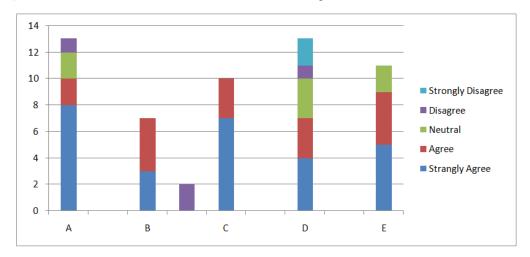

Figure 1. (Employee's Self Feedback post six months attending the training on learning parameter based on Dr. Kirkpatrick model)

Questionnaire based on level 2 i.e. learning for Self-Assessment for Employees (based on Dr. Kirkpatrick model)

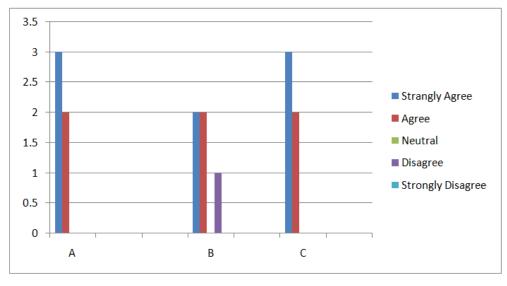| Questioner	Question represented in aforesaid chart 1.00
The training workshop gave me new dimension of thought process	A
I had attended similar workshop four years before but attending it again was needed as my workplace environment have changed a lot	B
I learned new concepts and my thought process was winded because of training	C
The knowledge acquired through training was practical and had scope of application in my workplace	D
I have taught some part of training content to my colleagues at my workplace	E

Figure 2. (Immediate Manager's Feedback post six months attending the training)

Data analysis and interpretation for Learning Parameter

The aforesaid feedback was collected post eight month of training. On the learning parameter the overall feedback shared by employees indicates that through the training

Behavioral Change

Post positive impact on Learning parameter, the next parameter that needs to be measure to understand effectualness of training is – what impact learning has led to Change

Questionnaire based on level 2 i.e. learning for Manager's Assessment for reporting Employee (based on Dr. Kirkpatrick model)

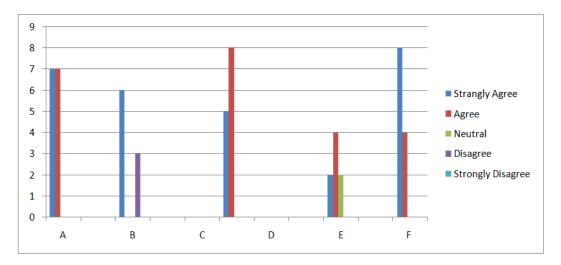| Questioner	Question represented in aforesaid chart 2.00
Post training one or two goals were set for team member to observe increase in learning (If Yes = strongly Agree and if No - Strongly Disagree)	A
In group meetings or feedback from other team members, it was observed that the subject's knowledge on the training attended has gone up significantly	B
Supervisor asked other team members to seek advice from the subject for problem they encountered at workplace (If no such efforts from supervisor = Strongly Disagree) (higher the nos. of such incidents of seeking advice = strongly agree)	C

Figure 3. (Employee's Self-assessment Feedback post six months attending the training on Behavioral Change parameter based on Dr. Kirkpatrick model)

Questionnaire based on level 3 i.e. Behavioral Change for Self-Assessment of Employees (based on Dr. Kirkpatrick model)

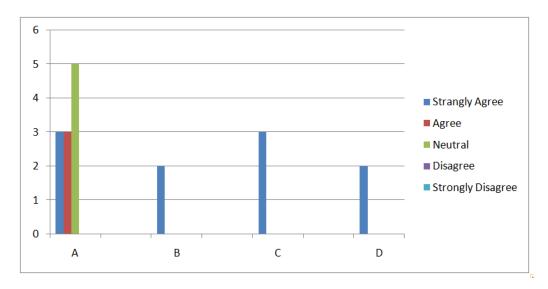| Questioner (Behavioral Change)	Question represented in aforesaid chart Nos. 3.00
I observed clear change in my body language, thought pattern and interaction with other on the topic of training that I have attended	A
These behavioral changes were visible to others and some of colleagues or customer's feedback clearly expressed the change in me	B
I took conscious efforts in bringing these behavioral changes in me (From question Nose/ 3. - attempt any one question as applicable to you)	C
Without much efforts I could change myself	D
I need coaching and mentoring help from my supervisor to change myself	E
Change in my behavior has helped in improving my performance at work	F

Figure 4. Immediate Manager's Feedback on Behavioral Change

individual behavior since any learning through training program must initiate Behavioral change process to see change in individual's performance at work place.

Data Analysis and Interpretation (For Behavioral Change parameter)

Data analysis and interpretation for Behavioral Change Parameter: Post learning parameter it was important to analyze if learning on specific area has helped any Behavioral Change since unless there are some indication in behavioral change, the learning can be short lived as the subject can go back to its earlier position, which is of course not desirable. Hence, separate questionnaire were developed to measure from Manager as well as from Employees himself to observe how learning acquired through training has led to behavioral change. From the Figure / Graph Nos. 3.00 it is very evident that all the employees as well Manager has provided either Strongly Agree or Agree feedback on visible behavioral change. It does indicate that soft skills training that all these employees have attended have actually bring change in their personality.

Result Achievement

Post positive impact on Learning and Behavioral Change parameters, the last but very important parameter that needs to be measure to understand effectiveness of training is – Result Achievement i.e. to what extent the Individual has been able to achieve predefined result with the help of training provided. Since Result achievement is ultimately the goal for any Organization as well for any individual and his Manager.

Data Analysis and Interpretation (For Result Achievement parameter)

Finally it is all about the result. The whole objective of spending time, money and all the energy on any kind of training program is to bring certain result orientation culture in the organization. All training programs starts with clear goals at individual as well at Organization level. In other words we are referring the same as ROI (Return in Investment). When the Employees as well as Manager's feedback was analyzed it came out clearly that when positive change was observed on learning, behavioral change, it ultimately led to bring Result orientation on individual basis.

Questionnaire based on level 3 i.e. Behavioral Change Ref. Figure 4.00 (for Manager's Assessment for reporting Employee (based on Dr. Kirkpatrick model)

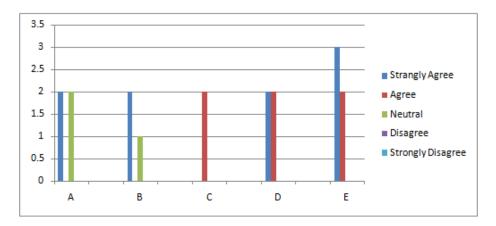| Questioner (Behavioral Change)	Question represented in aforesaid chart 4.00
There is clear change in overall attitudes / thought process of the subject pre and post training	A
Other team members have noticed these changes in subject's behavior and have discussed the same with me (it could be indirect reference also and not necessary direct discussion in this regard)	B
The change in subject's behavior is at par my expectation	C
The subject have taken initiatives to teach / train other team members on the new skills / learning acquired through training workshop	D

Figure 5. Immediate Manager's Feedback on Result Achievement (for team reporting into him / her)

Questionnaire based on level 4 i.e. Result Achievement Ref. Figure 5.00 (Immediate Manager's Feedback on Result Achievement (for team reporting into him / her)

Questioner (Result Achievement)	Question represented in aforesaid chart 5.00
The subject has scaled up on overall performance post training	A
The subject is working independently post training and on very less occasions Manager's intervention is acquired	B
The performance is improved in the area for which the subject was sent for training	C
The performance improved is being measured through Performance Appraisal	D
External or Internal Customer feedback supports subject's performance improvements	E

Figure 6. Pre Training Feedback

Business Unite Performance Data						
Pre Training Feedback from immediate Manager						
Parameters used to measure Business Performance	Rating scale of 1 to 10 (excellent towards 10)					
	May-12	Jun-12	Jul-12	Aug-12	Sep-12	Oct-12
Timely Delivery (for Production related employees)	5.50	4.50	5.00	4.00	5.00	4.50
Customer Satisfaction Survey (for all Department External or Internal Customer)	4.00	3.00	4.00	6.00	4.00	5.00
Meeting Quality Standards	4.00	5.50	6.00	5.00	4.00	3.00
Lead Generation or Lead Conversation (for Sales / Marketing Dept.)	4.00	5.00	4.50	3.50	4.50	5.00

Figure 7. Post Training Feedback

Business Unite Performance Data						
Post Training Feedback (Consolidated) from immediate Manager						
Parameters used to measure Business Performance	Rating scale of 1 to 10 (excellent towards 10)					
	Dec-12	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13	Apr-13	May-13
Timely Delivery (for Production related employees)	8.50	7.50	7.50	8.00	7.00	8.00
Customer Satisfaction Survey (for all Department External or Internal Customer)	8.00	8.50	6.50	7.50	9.00	9.00
Meeting Quality Standards	6.50	7.50	7.00	8.00	7.00	7.50
Lead Generation or Lead Conversation (for Sales / Marketing Dept.)	6.50	7.00	6.00	7.50	6.00	8.00

From the Figure (Graph) Nos. 5 the feedback collected from the Manager indicates there has been positive impact on result achievement of employees who have attended different training of soft skills program.

Business Unite Performance (measure pre and post training)

Business Unite performance was measure pre and post training based on following parameters as explained in below Figure No. 6. The performance measure was based on immediate Manager's feedback based on rating scale of 1 to 10 (1 being very poor and excellent towards 10).

The feedback gives clear picture of what extent soft skills training programs have contributed in overall business growth. Pre training feedback on overall business performance was an average, however when measure post training, it was close to excellent. It is important to note that on all three parameters of Soft Skills evaluation i.e. Learning, Behavioral Change and Result achievement, the feedback shared by Managers as well by employees themselves was around Agree or Strongly Agree.

Hence, a clear positive correlation is established between soft skills and business performance.

We had set two main objectives in the beginning of this Research Paper as follows

- To study and analyze if behavioral training programs bring skills improvement for employees if measured systematically.
- To study and understand the impact of behavioral training program (s) on employees performance and thereby improving the business result for the Organization.

To prove this correlation between Soft Skills Training and Business Unite Performance we took support of two i) Skills improvement through Behavioral Training program and ii) how this skills development has impact business growth or

performance. In this study it was established from pre and post training feedback that when soft skills development are measured through systematic process (post training), it does positively impact day to day business operations and their by increase business performance.

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