

Making Your Programmes Pop – Design with Transfer in Mind

It's possible to deliver a well-designed, engaging training programme that participants enjoy, and still see little or no change back at work.

Most organisations have experienced this at some point. The feedback is positive, people leave motivated, and the sessions feel valuable. But a few weeks later very little has shifted in how work actually happens.

Why good training doesn't always lead to change

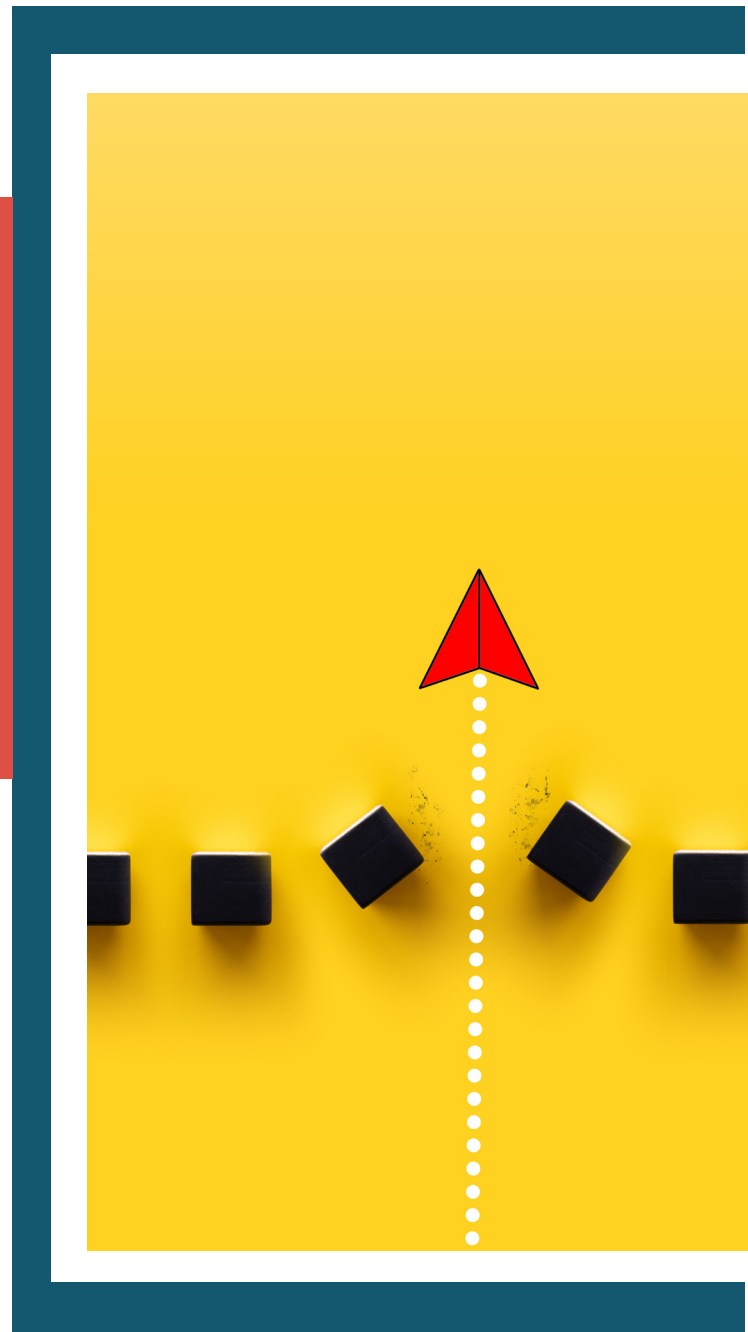
The issue is rarely the quality of the session itself.

In fact, the training room often works exactly as intended. It creates space to step back from the day-to-day, reflect, learn, and practise new approaches with peers. That time away from the 'doing' is important.

The problem is what happens next.

When people return to work, they step straight back into the same pressures, expectations, and habits. In those moments – during a difficult conversation, a rushed decision, or a high-pressure situation – default behaviours tend to win.

People know what to do, but the environment hasn't changed enough to support them to do it.



The gap isn't knowledge. It's application

Many organisations respond to this by adding more training. But the gap is really about whether new behaviours can be accessed and applied in real situations, under pressure, with competing priorities.

That requires something different.

- Time to pause and think in the moment
- Opportunities to practise in real work scenarios
- Feedback from others who can see what's happening
- Reinforcement over time, not just a single intervention

Without these conditions, even the most engaging programme will struggle to create lasting change.

Designing for transfer, not just delivery

If the goal is to shift behaviour, programmes need to be designed with transfer in mind from the outset.

That means thinking beyond the session itself and building an ecosystem around it.

Some of the most effective approaches include:

- **Setting clear expectations of behaviour** Define what “good” looks like in practice, and connect it to organisational priorities so it feels relevant and necessary, not optional.
- **Using real work, not hypothetical scenarios** Encourage participants to bring current challenges into the session so they leave with something immediately usable.
- **Involving line managers early and consistently** A simple pre-programme conversation about expectations, followed by regular check-ins between modules, can significantly increase application.
- **Building structured follow-through** Group coaching, peer learning sets, mentoring, or buddy systems all create space for reflection, feedback, and continued practice.
- **Reinforcing over time** Behaviour change happens through repeated use. Follow-up sessions, progress reviews, and integration into performance conversations help embed new ways of working.

A more realistic view of how development works

The training room is not the end point of learning. The real development happens in work – in conversations, decisions, and moments of pressure. That’s where behaviours are tested, refined, and embedded.

Programmes that recognise this, and are designed to support it, are far more likely to lead to meaningful, sustained change.

Keystone Training Ltd works with organisations to design development that goes beyond the session itself, linking leadership behaviours to real work, and building the conditions needed for those behaviours to stick.

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Rethinking how we measure success

This also has implications for how programmes are evaluated.

Immediate feedback has its place, but it only tells you how participants experienced the session. It doesn't tell you whether anything has changed.

To understand impact, it's more useful to ask:

- What have people actually tried back at work?
- What got in the way?
- What has changed in how they handle real situations?
- What support is still needed?

These questions shift the focus from satisfaction to application, which is where the real value sits.

