

# The Psychology of Training, Development, and Performance Improvement

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## Introduction

It is well established that the management and development of human resources is critical to the well-being and effectiveness of organizations. In their recent monograph, Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, and Smith-Jentsch (2012) concluded: “Continuous learning and skill development is now a way of life in modern organizations. To remain competitive, organizations must ensure their employees continually learn and develop. Training and development activities allow organizations to adapt, compete, excel, innovate, produce, be safe, improve service and reach goals” (p. 1). While the emphasis of the Salas et al. chapter is on training and development, training is but one of many methods by which organizations shape the knowledge, skills, and competencies of its workforce. In this volume, we focus on training and instruction, personal and professional development, and appraisal and feedback.

In concept and in practice, distinctions among training, development, and appraisal are at times artificial if not distracting. When a manager or supervisor appraises the performance of a subordinate and gives feedback, the purpose of that action is (often) to stimulate if not guide the development of the subordinate’s skills and competencies. When organizations establish formal development programs for members (e.g., leader self-development activities), formal and informal training are also critical components. Finally, training at its best is a multifaceted approach to stimulating change and can incorporate both personal development and assessment and feedback of trainees.

The effective development of human resources is one of the best ways that organizations can differentiate themselves in the marketplace (Huselid & Becker, 2011). This point is made by Boudreau and Ramstad in a 2005 paper. They argued that organizations are increasingly unable to differentiate themselves by access to capital, better product design, or unique markets. All organizations now compete in relatively the same marketplaces, with similar products, and with similar access to financing. Thus, it is the extent to