

## MANAGEMENT TRAINING EVALUATION: A CASE STUDY OF A RETAIL STORE CHAIN

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### **Abstract**

Objectives of the paper are: 1. to compare the theoretical concept of effective management training evaluation with obvious practice in one of the largest retail store chains in Latvia; 2. to identify the main strengths and weaknesses in training process implementation in practice; 3. to study the employee attitude (assessment) to the training provided.

The research question: what are the main differences between theory and practice in organising management training? What are the causes of these differences and how to resolve them?

The methodological base of the paper consists of literature analysis of training concept and efficiency criteria. The main theoretical base is Donald L Kirkpatrick's 4 level training evaluation model.

The research methods: literature analysis, in-depth interviews with company executives and training providers, the employee survey, statistical methods of data analysis.

In the research the authors are investigating the training process from the theoretical and practical point of view. The main attention is given to the successive stages of training process: making decision to provide training; identification of training needs, objectives, tasks; expected results and determination of the effectiveness criteria of training, the training provider's choice and training programme development. At the end of training, participants' reaction or attitude to training is measured. This study does not cover the research of employees' behaviour or job performance changes as training results.

The originality/value of the paper – the authors use training research methodology based on Donald L. Kirkpatrick's model. It is the first practical impact study of such nature and scope in the Latvian supermarket network.

### **Introduction**

As a result of socio-economic crisis, many companies in Latvia experienced significant changes in several areas, including the human resource management. Although the practice of leading world economies has proved that an effective employee training system is one of the cornerstones of business development, 52% of enterprises in Latvia reduced their training budget in 2009 (Lavian Business Consultant Association, 2009). Also in 2010, the report of The Latvian Association of Business Consultants "Personnel Development in 2010" shows that 50% of respondents have admitted that the training budget in 2010 continued reduction, if compared with 2009 (Locāns, 2010).

What are the motives for such an action? It is possible that company managers do not understand and do not evaluate a positive impact of motivated employees, possessing appropriate knowledge and skills, on development strategy of an enterprise. Currently managers are thinking more about short-term strategies, but it can negatively affect the company's operations in future. Perhaps company managers are not satisfied with training outcomes in the so-called 'rich' years? Then training was of an occasional character often; it was not systematically implemented, and in most cases the training outcomes were evaluated formally and superficially. Sometimes there was an uncritical following what the trainer provided and management training was organised based on the principle: everyone does it this way. Although in 2000-2008 enterprises were developing, were profitable and allocated a significant amount of the turnover to employee training, Eurostat data of 2008 about the efficiency per one employee indicate that in Latvia it was the third lowest – 51.5 in the European Union after Bulgaria and Rumania (Eurostat, 2009).

Irrespective of the reduction of the number of employees and their salaries, the role of personnel as the most important resource is increasing (Locāns, 2010). A significant criterion for enterprise competitiveness is employees' professional competence. Nowadays enterprises are stricter following that resources allocated for training and development enhancement are used at maximum efficiency (Locāns, 2010). Is the training appropriately evaluated nowadays? Do the training expenses justify themselves, and is the "training considered an investment not a cost?" (Strategic Human Resource Management, 2001). resources, neither the training evaluation criteria, nor methods, with which to evaluate training, are determined. Tennat et al.

(2002) research that only 35% of companies measure the effectiveness of the provided training (Tennat et al., 2002)

The goal of this research is to compare the evaluation of the theoretical concept for training process with practice. The research questions are: What are the main differences between theory and practice, evaluating management training? What are the strengths and weaknesses of training evaluation in an enterprise? What are the causes and how to resolve them? In the present paper the authors study the training process and the trainees' attitude to training, using the review of theoretical literature, in-depth interviews and the training participants' survey. The research pays attention to successive stages of the training process: making a decision about the need for training, identifying the training needs, goals, objectives, planned outcomes and training efficiency criteria, choice of the trainer, developing the training programme. At the end of the training participants' reaction or satisfaction with the training is evaluated, i.e. their attitude. This research does not comprise the research of the changes of employee behaviour or work results as a result of training.

The research basis is one of the largest retail chains in Latvia, where general management training was held from December 2010 until February 2011.

The idea and initiative about organising training come from the company manager, as a response to the employee survey about job satisfaction in the autumn of 2010. The correlation analysis of the evaluation of the satisfaction aspects indicated close and very significant relation between leadership and planning, organisational culture, internal communication and the employee role and self-sentiment in the company. In all cases the correlation coefficient  $r$  was  $\geq \pm 0.6$  (Rendeniece, 2010). Therefore the company management decided to organise training for managers, offering a wide training programme that included the basics of management, communication and quality management. Training participants were different level managers – 18 administrative staff, 16 store managers, 15 goods managers and 26 senior shift managers – 75 employees all together. The training was organised in 4 groups, according to the management level; 9 days for every group.

### Literature review

In the study of theoretical literature the authors are analyzing training efficiency criteria and the most recognised methods for measuring effectiveness since effective and reliable evaluation allows explain the value of training and development.

Effectiveness [German *Effektivität* < fr. < lat. *effectivus* effective] – 1; it is how easy, fast and cheap the determined goal can be attained with the chosen means, method or action; 2. *ec.* maximum yield of resources, their use with minimum losses (Andersone, 2005).

Effective [lat. *effectivus*] – such a means, method, type of action with the help of which the determined goal can be easily, fast and cheaply attained; such that offers the necessary result (ibid, 2005) instead]

Researchers and practitioners Gordon, A., Koul, J., Armstrong, M. consider that training will be effective, if the training needs are correctly determined, and they help to achieve strategic goals of an organisation (Gordon, 2006, Koyл, 2004). It means that before starting training, the company should study and analyse employee job performance. Choice of an appropriate type and method of training – formal or informal, internal or external, for the training needs – is one of the factors that enhance training effectiveness (reference?). Such authors as Tabbassi, Bakar, and Davenport have indicated advantages and disadvantages of the types and methods of training, which have to be taken into consideration when organising training (Tabbassi, Bakar, 2009).

Michael Armstrong (2004) emphasises that training should correspond to certain requirements. A trainee's motivation and a company's management support to training are significant criteria of training effectiveness. Training will be more effective, if it also corresponds to the trainee's needs. People can learn in different conditions, if they expect that it will allow satisfying their need for achievement, growth, recognition and professional demand (Армстронг, 2004).

Durcan, Kirkbride (1987) and Gitomer (2010) indicate importance of a training programme content and professionalism of a trainer. They recommend demanding training evaluation – it is necessary to find a tested programme and trainer, who would be ready to evaluate the success of the training programme. However, company managers do not devote sufficient time to evaluate employee training programmes (Gitomer, 2010). This is a big mistake, because ineffective training hinders work flow and employee costs continue to grow. Therefore, it should be ensured that training programmes work according to the appropriately determined requirements.

Two aspects can be distinguished in evaluating the training effectiveness: evaluation of the training process as such and evaluation of the training end product or training results. However, it has to be admitted that evaluation of training effectiveness means completely different things for the various involved groups.

The response depends on who asks and from what perspective of interests the questions are asked and why (Gordon 2006).

For the company's management, evaluation of training effectiveness can answer the following questions: "Will the training help me to solve my problems? Will it achieve the defined goals? Is it worth the invested money and is it worth to invest in training programmes in future?" The essence for evaluating training effectiveness is absolutely different for a trainer, whose questions are: "Have the defined goals been achieved? Was the training effective?" Employees, who have participated in training, ask: "Will the training help me to execute my work responsibilities better, faster and more qualitatively? Will it affect my career growth opportunities? What am I doing? Why do I need it?" (Scmalenbach, 2005).

To perform a successful evaluation of training effectiveness, all three categories should be involved in discussing this issue and the most optimal method of evaluation should be chosen. One of the wellknown approaches is the multi-factor approach, which includes several separate evaluation methods. Evaluation methods can be divided as described by the researchers Hamblin and Kirkpatrick, who described the impact of training at different levels, from an individual's to an organisation's indicators (O'Connor *et al.*, 2008).

Kirkpatrick's hierarchy model offers a useful framework for evaluating the training results and process taking into consideration training evaluation at four levels: Reaction – how training participants react to the training process; Learning – to what extent trainees acquire knowledge and skills; Performance – the ability to exhibit the acquired skills at work; Impact – includes such units as money, effectiveness, moral, etc. Figure 1 presents how these four levels are interconnected.

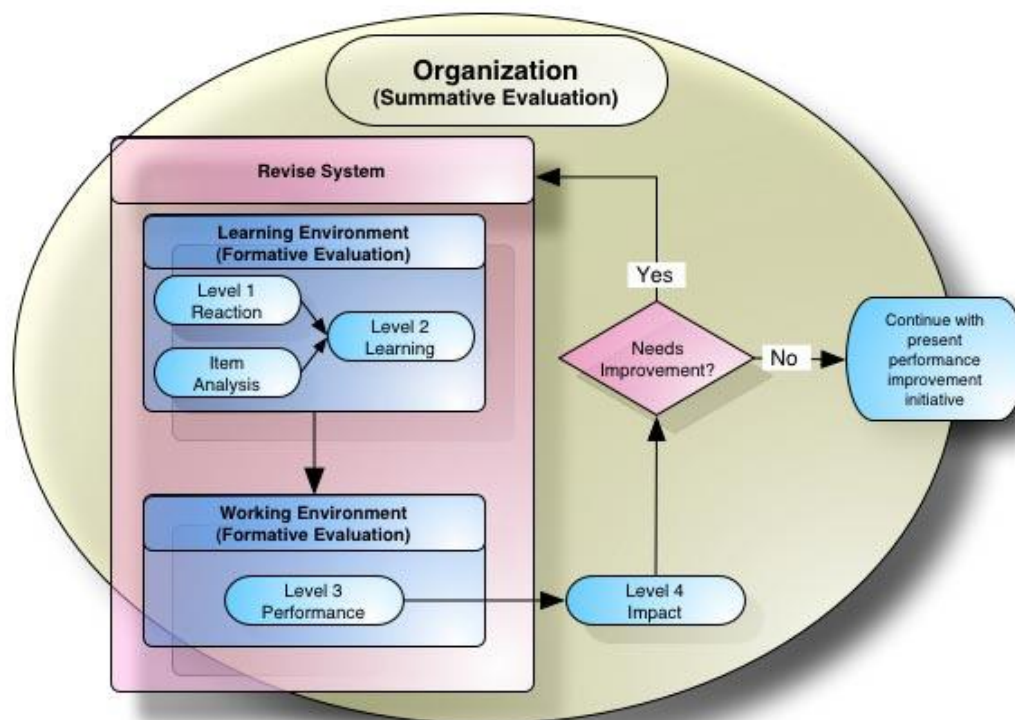


Figure 1. Connection of training evaluation levels. (Source: <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/isd/kirkpatrick.html>)

The model clearly defines how the "performance changes as a result of training" appear (Global Learning Alliance and Knowledge Advisors, 2004).

In line with the research object – a training process – the authors paid more attention to training evaluation at the first two levels – Reaction and Learning. Donald L. Kirkpatrick indicated that "evaluation of reaction is the same as client satisfaction evaluation. If the training is effective, it is important that the trainees react to them favourably." Likewise, it is emphasised that "it is important to evaluate training, because you cannot expect performance change, if one or several of the training goals have not been achieved" (Kirkpatrick, 1994).

1. Reaction level. At this training evaluation level how trainees react to training is evaluated. Questionnaires filled in at the end of the training are often used as a research tool. At this level, trainees may say, whether the course content and delivery can satisfy their needs. This level does not prove the training

performance potential as it is impossible to measure whether trainees have obtained new knowledge and skills that will be used in the work environment. Therefore some researchers do not consider reaction level measurements significant. However, trainees' interest, attitude and motivation often are critical for a success of any training process. When training is presented, every employee decides and assesses, whether it is important and attainable. The consequence of this assessment is the trainee's motivation (Markus & Ruvulo, 1990).

2. Learning level. It has to be evaluated to what extent participants have changed their attitude, improved their knowledge and skills as a result of training. The question whether the employee has learned anything should be answered. It means applying different kinds of post-testing to find out what skills employees have acquired. To measure what exactly the training participants have acquired, pre-testing should be used prior to training. Only then it is possible to state what the employees knew and could do before the training and what exactly they have acquired during the training.

When measuring Learning, it is important to define the training goal. Usually training evaluation is performed answering the following questions: what knowledge has been obtained? What skills have been developed or improved? How has the attitude changed? At this stage training evaluation takes place through trainee evaluation. At this level evaluation tools that measure the trainees, not the particular training process, are used. Evaluation of the training results for a particular trainee should not be mixed with the evaluation of the training process (Tovey, 2004). Changes in the trainee skills, knowledge and attitude often poorly correlate with the performance (Clark, 2008). Therefore, at the next training evaluation level - Performance level - it has to be proved that the acquired knowledge and skills are applied in practice. However, it happens very seldom, when evaluating training.

3. Performance level - changes in the performance as a result of attended training. At this level employees' ability to use the obtained knowledge at work is evaluated. Measuring takes place at work, not in the classroom. Formal and informal methods of measurement can be used. Answering to the question whether people use their newly acquired knowledge about work, with the help of testing or observation it is determined, whether now employees exhibit the desirable performance, whether the newly acquired skills and knowledge are used at their work performance. At this level the evaluation is critical - if the training is effectively managed, the evaluation will show whether the knowledge and skills are transferred to the work environment or not, and if not, then why.

4. Impact level. It is the highest evaluation level in Kirkpatrick's hierarchy. At this level the effectiveness of the training programme is evaluated, measuring the gains in the units of money, effectiveness, moral, team work.

Moving from the first to the next levels, the training evaluation process becomes more complicated and time-consuming, but the evaluation at a higher level offers more valuable information. The fourth level is the most significant, and perhaps also the most complicated step because the fourth level evaluates business results achieved in relation with the employee training (Clark, 2008).

In reality the first level evaluation is most frequently performed, because it is easier. However, it is not right to evaluate training at the level of Impact without performing the analysis of the previous levels. Don Kirkpatrick's follower and his son Jim Kirkpatrick affirmed: "It is the statement of me and my farther, in cooperation with personnel management specialists, that then and only then (after evaluating the previous levels), when the value of training for business can be started to be justified. Unfortunately, many organisations understand science, but are far from success in evaluation. It is because they have no competence in training evaluation" (Kirkpatrick, 2008).

Using the model for determining the training effectiveness, any organisation both in private and public sector can obtain detailed information about the impact of employee training on the company's performance and the defined goals. Analysing the information obtained at each level, it is possible to work out further action plans for the company development and to make a decision about adjusting the employee training in future. Learning Resources Network research data indicate that 77% of enterprises evaluate training at the Reaction level analysis; 36% evaluate a degree, to which the material has been acquired, 15% evaluate changes in employee performance at the workplace and only 8% evaluate results of changes in business operations (Hevilda, 2008).

Irrespective of the previous criticism, Kirkpatrick's (1976) model is still the leading one among the training evaluation systems. This model can be considered the basis for training evaluation, using which the modern evaluation procedure mechanism is being developed (O'Connor et al., 2008).

### Research methods

When designing the research tools for evaluating training in a retail store chain, the authors mainly based them on the results of the Level 1 and 2 analysis of Kirkpatrick's model. But Kirkpatrick's Reaction and Learning levels concentrate on evaluation of an individual's motivation, needs and interests. If this training evaluation model is applied to training evaluation in a company, the authors consider not relating every trainee's needs and motivation with the company's needs and goals at the Reaction level as a deficiency. Therefore, based on the opinion of other abovementioned authors, the interview and questionnaire included questions about relations between the training and company goals, about management support for training etc.

To evaluate management training in the retail store chain, the authors set the following criteria for training evaluation, on the basis of which the authors can determine the training effectiveness that influence the development of the company in the future:

1. correspondence of training to the company's strategic goals.
2. defining the training goal and objectives.
3. choice of the training programme content, length and training methods.
4. managers' interest in improving the employees' professional performance.
5. testing the knowledge obtained during training.
6. application of the knowledge and skills acquired during the training to everyday work.
7. transferring the knowledge obtained during the training to the colleagues.

The present research does not comprise training evaluation at the level 3 – changes in employee performance, and 4 – changes in the work results, because it is delimitation.

The authors of the present paper used a structured in-depth interview as the first method. There were three interviews held: with the training provider (TP), with a member of the company Board (BM) and with the Human Resource Manager (HRM). Interview questions were slightly modified, depending on the role the interviewee occupies in the training process. Interviews were held during the first month after starting the training. Interviews consisted of 15-19 questions and an average length of an interview was 1.5 hours. Interview questions were designed so that the training process could be evaluated according to the conclusions about qualitative and effective management training gained from the theoretical research.

The following aspects were clarified in the interviews:

1. correspondence of training to the company strategy and needs,
2. defining of the training goals and objectives,
3. choice of the training provider,
4. selection of training participants and motivating them for training,
5. choice of the training programme content, length and training methods,
6. relation of training and performance results,
7. understanding of evaluation of training effectiveness, criteria for evaluating the training results.

Analysing the results of the survey, the authors used above mentioned criteria that were clarified in the empirical research, because these criteria give much clearer understanding of the training evaluation from trainers, managers and trainees point of view. These criteria allow to analyse and draw conclusions about the ongoing training processes in the particular retail store chain company.

The other method of empirical research was a survey, the aim of which was to evaluate the level of trainees' reaction or attitude. The questionnaire included 10 questions, aimed to obtain information about how the participants understand training needs, goal and objectives, whether employees evaluate training as useful, what their opinion about the changes of different factors as a result of the training is. The survey was held a week before the end of the training and 67 respondents, or 89% of the 75 trainees, filled in the questionnaires. 13 administrative staff, 19 store managers and 35 shift managers and goods managers responded. Most of the respondents have a secondary or secondary vocational education – 51, or 68%, whereas there is a little number of those managers among the respondents, who have a basic school education or who hold a PhD degree. In both cases it is 1 respondent, or 1.49%, of the total number of respondents.

## Results

### 1. Decision about training organisation. Correspondence of training to the company strategy and needs.

Both the training provider and the company Board member tell in the interview that the company goals have not been defined in writing yet. "They are in their (Board's) heads," says the training provider. Therefore, one of the first tasks in this training is to put company goals on the paper. The company Board member informs that to date, such a wide training has not been held, this is the first training for managers. The idea about management training has existed for long, but it has taken a long time to make the decision, because the number of employees (managers) is large and it is related with high costs, because in the "rich" years the training costs were unjustifiably high. Moreover, during the economic growth, profit and cash was realised, so there was no justified need for training. However, in the period of turnover and profit reduction it is necessary to think about improving the quality of client service, to reduce employee turnover and to increase employee motivation, when all the additional benefits were "cut". For the company management these features were a signal for the need of management training. Also, financially it was possible to "bear" the training, because the company found partial funding from European Structural Funds (hereinafter referred to as ESF) resources for it.

The training provider (TP) indicates that already before this training, there had been a successful cooperation with the company, when performing "false customer surveys" and individual observations in the work of a store. Results indicated to a number of problems to be solved in the company. The HRM did not participate in making the decision about the training necessity. It is the company management decision, which she evaluates positively. The company top management has mainly grown out of shop-assistants; therefore this training satisfies the company need for management skills. The majority of the trainees have never studied management.

The survey of the trainees reveals differences about how the company determines the management needs: most of the respondents or 58.2% consider that managers determine the training needs. 26.9% of the respondents consider that the training need is determined based on the training plan developed during the employee performance assessment. Whereas 14.9% of the respondents emphasise that the training need was determined by the company owners. None of the respondents indicates that the training need has been determined as result of their personal initiative.

### 2. Defining the training goals and objectives.

The BM defines the training goal briefly: restructuring of all the processes – and names all training objectives one after another. It does not cause her any problems. The HRM gives the acquisition of management knowledge and enhancing the practical skills as the training goals. Whereas, the TP also mentions personal growth (self-analysis, development of self-confidence) in addition to what the HR manager has mentioned. Understanding about the training objectives is similar, but, in difference from the BM, the TP cannot list them briefly and in order. The narrative is long, with examples from the training process, the training objectives can be identified only when looking at the interview notes.

When asked whether they were informed about what changes or improvement in the performance is expected from the employee and whether they knew what skills and knowledge they themselves would like to obtain from the training, the training participants offered only partly affirmative answers (see Figure 2).

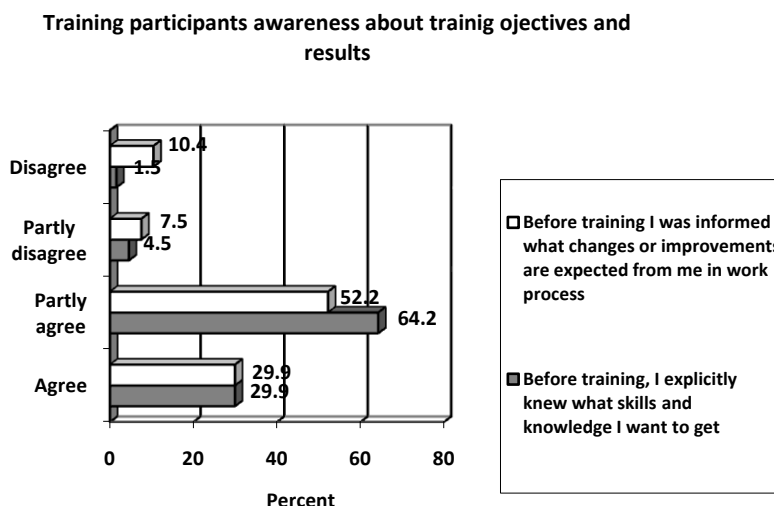


Figure 2. Training participants awareness of the training objectives and expected results

### 3. *Choice of the training provider.*

The training provider was chosen based on the previous positive cooperation experience. It was significant that the price of the offered training course satisfied both parties. The training provider agreed to participate in the ESF project. The choice of another training provider was not even considered. No market research of the management training offers was performed.

### 4. *Choice of training participants and their motivation for training.*

The opinion that, first, all level managers should study is unanimous among all the interviewees. For changes to start in a company, changes in the managers' attitude and performance should be implemented. The HRM repeatedly emphasises that many managers have been promoted from lower level employee positions and they lack management skills. Trainees were divided in groups according to their positions – administration, who are the top level managers; store managers, who could relatively be called middle level managers; and first-line managers – goods managers and shift managers. The TP, the BM and the HRM indicate that starting the training, the employee professional competence was not evaluated. The BM informs that there is an idea about every employee's competence, but the professional evaluation of the individual does not exist. The competence of a particular person is measured by performance results of the particular shop. The HRM also confirms that it is only a subjective opinion developed about the employee during the cooperation. Before the training the BM explained briefly in each group, why the training was held, but detailed training objectives were not mentioned, the training organisation was discussed more. Shift managers were informed by their supervisors. Every trainee received a set of training materials that included the training programme, in which the training goal was not stated.

Evaluating, whether the company management is interested in training the staff, 97% of the respondents replied in the affirmative, 2, or 3% of the respondents, partly agreed with the statement, which approves the role of the company management as the initiator of the training.

### 5. *Choice of the training programme content, length and training methods.*

The TP has the largest role/weight in developing the training programme content. The training programme content was designed after discussions with the company owners, and then the training programme was supplemented or narrowed down to particular themes as seen by the BM. The main themes of the programme content are reflected in the programme objectives. The programme is slightly different for top level managers; it pays more attention to defining the company mission, vision and strategic goals. When designing the training programme, the opinion of the potential trainees was not asked. The HRM does not participate in designing the programme. The TP justifies the answer to the question, why the length of training for each group was exactly 9 days with the offered training budget. Different training methods are used in the training process; the emphasis is placed on enhancing the knowledge in practice. Group work, case analysis, role plays – in all these methods examples from real work situations are used. Homework assignments, closely related with the work, are also used.

To clarify the employee evaluation of the training content and quality, the employee survey comprised the statement: "If the training that was meant for improving my professional knowledge required co-financing, I would be ready to provide it." 73.1% of the respondents are ready to co-finance the company organised training, but 26.7% do not agree with it.

### 6. *Relation of training and performance results.*

Giving an answer to the question "Do you consider that training should be directly related to the performance result?" all the interviewees answered affirmatively. When explaining in more details, the Board member anticipates that the employee rotation should decrease as a result of training, that information exchange will improve, that individual and departmental goals will be set and negativism will decrease but team spirit will develop. The TP considers that it is not only the employees, who will acquire new knowledge and skills and who play a role in improving the training and performance results, but it is also the company management that should take care of enhancing the obtained knowledge in practice. The HRM emphasises that training participants are prepared to use all the acquired information in work processes.

Analysing the respondents' opinion about the skills acquired during the training, it can be observed that all respondents (89.6% fully agree and 10.4% partly agree) confirm that they are useful for professional improvement and they will ensure higher professional performance results (86.6% agree and 11.9% partly agree).

To enhance the knowledge obtained during the training and to ascertain the improvement of professional knowledge and skills, 97% of the respondents have indicated that the knowledge acquired during the training was tested and that they participated in such tests. 70% of the respondents, who have participated in the knowledge test, indicate that knowledge is tested with the help of different tests. The response of the other 30% is different. It is indicated that the obtained knowledge is tested with different practical assignments,

role plays are used, problem situations are solved, as well as the acquired knowledge is evaluated when assessing the work performance process and application of the obtained knowledge to practice.

#### 7. Training effectiveness. Training process evaluation criteria.

During the interviews the authors of the present paper were looking for answers to the questions related with the evaluation of training effectiveness. The answers are dominated by the opinion that training will be effective, if the employee performance improves after the training, if their skills and working style improves. The HRM considers that one of the criteria, whether the training has been effective, is in using and maintaining the acquired knowledge and skills at work. But all the interviewees admit that upon starting the training process specific criteria that should be improved as a result of the training were not defined.

The TP has knowledge and experience that the training results can be measured and he indicates that specific skills should be measured before the training and then measured one more time after the training. When inquired how the trainer knows that his product has been useful for the client, he states that any indicators that would prove the usefulness of the training have not been precisely defined and measured. The TP adds that if there were a particular demand from the client, it would be done, effectiveness would be measured and a method most likely would be found.

After the training, the employees were asked whether they use the obtained knowledge in everyday work, thus improving the work quality, effectiveness, efficiency, as well as successful attainment of the set goals. 98.5% (64.2% agreed and 34.3% partly agreed) of the respondents state that they use the obtained knowledge in their everyday work, while only 1 respondent or 1.5% more does not use the obtained knowledge at work than does.

An important factor that indicates to the training effectiveness is whether the respondents also transfer the obtained knowledge to the subordinates to increase their competence level, thus ensuring professional operation of the entire team. Analysing the data obtained from the survey, it can be concluded that, as a result of training, 45 respondents, or 67.2%, agree that they transfer the knowledge obtained during the training to colleagues and 22 respondents, or 32.8%, partly agree (see Figure 3).

For the colleagues to receive the necessary, topical information from the manager, who has attended training, after the training, meetings are organised, individual discussions with employees are held, the training materials are sent to the colleagues and the most important information is shared, as well as advice is offered during the work, based on the knowledge obtained during the training, to solve different issues and problems.

Within the framework of the empirical research, when evaluating the effectiveness of training, the authors clarified, whether there exists a significant correlation in the respondents' subjective evaluation about the correspondence of the organised training for improving the knowledge and the use and transfer of the obtained knowledge and skills (see Table 1), as well as between the improvement of the professional performance as a result of training, use and transfer of the knowledge and skills obtained during the training to colleagues (see Table 2). To determine how significant this correlation is, Spearman's correlation coefficient was calculated (Rašcevska, Kristapone, 2000).

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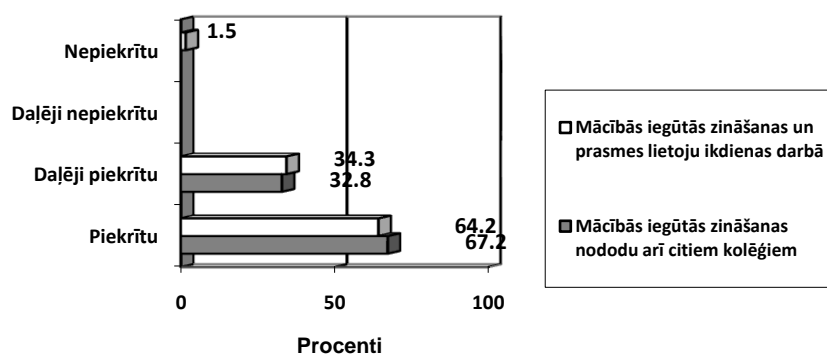


Figure 3. Use of the knowledge obtained during the training and transferring the knowledge to the colleagues

The results depicted in Table 1 approve that there is statistically significant correlation between the application of the obtained knowledge to everyday work and transferring the obtained knowledge to colleagues with a probability 0.95 or the significance level 0.05 because the calculated correlation coefficient is 0.311. It means that the more the obtained knowledge is used in everyday work, the more it is transferred to colleagues and vice verse.

Determining the correlation based on closeness, it can be concluded that it is weak, but considerable, because the calculated correlation coefficient is between 0.2 and 0.4.

Table 1

**Correlation indicators of the role of training in improving professional knowledge and their use in everyday work**

			I consider the organised training corresponding to the improvement of my professional knowledge	I use the obtained knowledge and skills in everyday work	I transfer the obtained knowledge to other colleagues
Spearman's rho	I consider the organised training corresponding to the improvement of my professional knowledge	Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	1.000  67	.145 .241 67	-.020 .870 67
	I use the obtained knowledge and skills in everyday work	Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.145 .241 67	1.000  67	.311* .010 67
	I transfer the obtained knowledge to other colleagues	Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.020 .870 67	.311* .010 67	1.000  67

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

But the results presented in Table 2 approve that an even closer and statistically more significant correlation between the increase of results of professional activities and the application of knowledge obtained during the training to everyday work exists. The calculated correlation coefficient 0.336 indicates that there is a statistically significant correlation with a probability 0.99 or the significance level 0.01.

Determining the correlation based on closeness, it can be concluded that like it was above, in this case the correlation is weak, but considerable.

Table 2

**Correlation indicators for the significance of training in increasing the results of professional activities and use in everyday work**

			This training ensures higher results of professional activities	I use the obtained knowledge and skills in everyday work	I transfer the obtained knowledge to other colleagues
Spearman's rho	This training ensures higher results of	Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000  67	.336** .005 67	.211 .087 67

	professional activities	N			
	I use the obtained knowledge and skills in everyday work	Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.336** .005 67	1.000 67	311* .010 67
	I transfer the obtained knowledge to other colleagues	Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.211 .087 67	.311* .010 67	1.000 67

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Answers to the last question of the questionnaire inform, according to respondents, what factors will change as a result of the provided training. Respondents ranked the factors according to their importance, where 1 is the most important and 7 – the least important factor. Respondents' answers reveal that the most important factor that could change due to the provided training is the increase of work efficiency, whereas the least important is the decrease of employee turnover (see Table 3).

Table 3

### Factor changes as a result of training

<i>Factors that will change as a result of training</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Work efficiency increases	1
Quality of work improves	2
Number of admitted mistakes during execution of work responsibilities decreases	3
Inexpedient use of resources decreases	4
Relations among colleagues improve	5
Number of complaints decreases	6
Employee turnover decreases	7

Indicating to the increase of work efficiency and improvement of the quality of work as the most important factors, the others are subordinated to the two, because increasing the work efficiency and improving the level of work quality, the number of admitted mistakes and inexpedient use of resources, as well as the number of received complaints should decrease.

### Conclusions

In the present research management training was evaluated both at the preparation stage, in which the correspondence of training to the company strategic goals and needs is determined, the training content, the type of training, training methods and the training provider are chosen and at the Reaction and Learning levels of Kirkpatrick's model.

The strategic goals of a retail company have not been defined before starting the training, which hinders defining the particular training goals, objectives and the anticipated training results. Employees were not asked about their desires regarding the training. The decision and initiative about organising the training comes from the company management, based on two previously performed surveys in the company, and the company financial information. Thus, the training has the company management support, which facilitates employee motivation for training. The training provider is selected based on the positive cooperation experience, positive references and mutually beneficial terms; the market research is not performed. The interviewees agree about the choice of the training participants – to improve the company performance, training should begin with managers, in addition, at all structural levels. The training programme content is similar to other training programmes offered in the market, the goal of which is the improvement of management skills. Participants are divided into groups and the programme is slightly differentiated according to the management level in the company. The length of training is justified by the training budget, not by the fact that this length is necessary to enhance the obtained knowledge, so that it could be used at work.

Understanding about the training need is similar to all the parties involved in training. The company manager can very precisely define it at the strategic objectives and the HRM – at the tactical tasks. The TP answers are rather vague. Although the TP and the BM have discussed the training goal, it is not defined equally. The BM concentrates on the process improvement but the TP – on the improvement of skills and personal development. The HRM understands the goal similarly to the TP. Not to allow deviations and interpretations, the training goal, objectives and needs should be fixed in writing. If before the training all the involved parties have a unified definition of the training objectives, it eases the evaluation of the training outcomes.

Neither the TP, nor the company employees hold a common opinion about what skills and knowledge the training participants should obtain, what competences should be developed and what performance should be changed. The level of employees' individual competence was not determined before the training. It makes the development of the training programme and later also the evaluation of training outcomes more difficult. Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model allows measuring, whether the employee performance has changed with the help of observations and attitude research at the Level 3 – Performance, but it is impossible to determine the extent, if no pre-testing is performed.

The correlation between the training process and the results is related with a successful attainment of the training goals. The BM defines the anticipated training outcomes most specifically, but it has to be concluded that there is a lack of conformity between the TP, BM and the HRM views. The authors of the present paper did not receive an answer to the question, how the training effectiveness will be measured. Not setting the testing criteria can be related to both the general processes that could improve as a result of the training, e.g. employee rotation, improvement of the information flow, team work skills, and to the development of specific employee skills. Irrespective of the fact that the training provider understands measurement of training effectiveness, in this case it was not planned to be measured

Based on the company practice in training evaluation, it can be concluded that the company manager and the training provider lack competence in training evaluation. Although the company management is interested in organising training, understands its importance and allocates large financial

Irrespective of the drawbacks in the training preparation stage, employees positively evaluate the training. They admit that the knowledge and skills acquired during the training improve their professional level. Testing of the obtained knowledge proved that managers acquired the study material. However, the training effectiveness is determined by application of the obtained knowledge and skills to everyday work, ensuring better and better performance. Training has even greater significance, if the obtained knowledge is transferred to the subordinates to increase their competence level, thus ensuring the professional work of the entire team. The correlation analysis of the respondents' answers indicated to a significant correlation between the use of knowledge and skills in everyday work and their transfer to other colleagues (see Table 1), as well as between the improvement of professional performance as a result of training and the use of the obtained knowledge and skills in everyday work (see Table 2). Thus, the more employees will evaluate that training improves professional knowledge and provides higher professional performance results, the more knowledge and skills will be used in everyday work and transferred to other colleagues. It indicates how important the preparation stage is for training, during which the correspondence of the training to the company goals and the training objectives is determined.

The correlation revealed in this case approves that there is a close relationship between the training evaluation levels in Kirkpatrick's model: the way, how Learning takes place, affects whether the knowledge is used and transferred to others (Behaviour/Performance), whereas changes in the employee performance change the Result/Impact.

### **Input for future research**

The answers of the training participants allow concluding that the company organises qualitative and effective training that ensures improvement of managements' knowledge and skills, the use of this knowledge and skills in work processes and their transfer to colleagues, as a result providing the increase of the overall performance outcomes of the respective structural unit and the entire company, as well as the improvement of the total business indicators. This is the employee opinion, but to evaluate the management training effectiveness objectively, the evaluation should be continued at the Behaviour and Results level.

Management training in the retail shops chain is the company management's initiative and the training has the management support. The company management understands and justifies the need for management training, can define the training goals and expected outcomes, but the training evaluation is not performed in the company, because there is no sufficient competence. Although the tendencies in human resource

management field in Latvia in 2009-2010 (Locāns, 2010) indicate that the evaluation of the yield from personnel training and development activities increases, detailed research is necessary about how qualitative and extended the training evaluation in companies is.

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