

Human Performance Project Summary for UNC Charlotte Continuing Education

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Executive Summary

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte Continuing Education offers a robust variety of courses and certifications to students in the Charlotte region. They serve individuals as well as a number of corporate partners. An important part of being able to continue to offer updated and relevant courses includes adding fresh material to available course offerings from time to time. However, as it is now, the current process for proposing new courses has been identified as inconsistent.

The objective of this project was to identify and address gaps within the existing program proposal process used by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte Continuing Education department. In order to do this we distributed surveys, conducted informal interviews, and viewed secondary data sources. Results were used to identify specific gaps within the current proposal process and their causes. This included gaps in communication throughout the proposal process and a lack of process standardization.

Additionally we identified four recommended actions we believe will help to improve the proposal process for the future. Recommendations included: (1) developing a standardized new program proposal process, (2) implementing training of the new program proposal process across the department, (3) utilizing timeline management tools, such as a gantt chart, and (4) hosting kickoff celebrations for successfully approved proposals.

The body of this paper includes full details of the analysis, findings, and recommendations of graduate students in the Human Performance Technology course, as part of the Instructional Systems Technology program at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Purpose of the Project

We have partnered with The University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNC Charlotte) Continuing Education to analyze gaps within their existing new program proposal process (see Gap Analysis for further explanation). Part of the everyday operations of UNC Charlotte Continuing Education include developing new and relevant non-credit courses and certificate programs. The department currently offers a wide variety of courses, however there is a need to continue to develop and offer new programs. Doing so helps to meet demand for certain program offerings, which in turn generates revenue.

The purpose of this project is to examine the gaps within the new program proposal process in the department and to offer intervention solutions based on research. This project follows each phase of the ISPI Performance Improvement/HPT Model (see Appendix C) (Van Tiem, Dessinger, Moseley, 2012). Specifically this project focuses on the performance analysis and intervention selection phases of the ISPI/HPT Model. The team's goal is to conduct a thorough analysis and offer a set of recommended intervention solutions (see Appendices A & B).

Performance Problem

Currently, the department's process for new non-credit program proposals is in need of streamlining and proper adoption among staff members.

As it is now, the process lacks:

- Documentation of proposals prior to formal submission to the system of record (Destiny One)
- Centralized, organization, storage, and access to research and analysis conducted for proposals
- Consistent transition of information from Program Directors to necessary Support Staff

Additionally, it suffers from the following performance/behavior issues:

- Program development staff struggles to adopt processes to streamline formal submissions of new proposals and properly document and store data research.
- Support staff are unaware of new course proposals until publication or personal touch points from another team member.

- Marketing staff are not equipped with necessary research and new program information for campaigns.
- Content is inconsistent in specific areas and lacks follow-up processes.

These issues result in:

- Additional legwork in order to gather the amount of information needed to advertise new programs.
- Marketing initiatives that are developed under rushed conditions, shortened advertising windows and slow to launch campaigns.
- Lack of consistent information available for support staff to communicate accurately with prospective students.
- Potential loss of program enrollments due to non-enrollment and cancellation of course offerings.
- 'Hard feelings' and frustration among program development and support staff

Organizational Analysis

UNC Charlotte Continuing Education is located in Uptown Charlotte, North Carolina at the UNC Charlotte Center City building. This is the only UNC Charlotte building conceived and designed specifically to serve the people, organizations, and businesses of the Charlotte region.

The Continuing Education mission statement is as follows:

"We help individuals and employers achieve their professional, personal, and organizational goals by offering quality programs with practical application. Our courses are taught by knowledgeable instructors, subject matter experts and industry practitioners with real world experience so you can immediately apply what you've learned to enhance your career and your business."

(UNC Charlotte Continuing Education, 2017)

The department offers high-quality, non-credit certificate programs and courses in a variety of fields including accounting, business, engineering, event planning, exam preparation, law, management, human resources, and information technology. Additionally, they also offer youth programming such as summer camps, reading skill development, and college exam preparation (for high school students). Courses are designed with practical application in mind, to help individuals and employers achieve their professional, personal, and organizational goals. They are taught by subject matter experts and industry practitioners with real-world experience.

Environmental Analysis

Space

The UNC Charlotte Continuing Education staff are located at the UNC Charlotte Center City building which is located in uptown Charlotte, NC and is not on the main campus of the University. The staff is housed within the same suite with Program Directors, Accounting, Payroll, Program Support, Marketing and the Director of Operations in the back of the suite and Registration, IT, Engagement Communications and Director of Continuing Education located at the front.

The office setting is a mix of private offices and cubicles. Allowing private and public communication possible in-person. Email and messaging is also available for staff via University Gmail.

Resources: *Technology*

The department utilizes Destiny One, a customer lifecycle management software made specifically for higher education units that serve non-traditional students (Destiny Solutions). In addition, the department uses a shared network drive, tools within Google Suite Enterprise, a web based project and process management tool (Monday.com), and QuickBase from Intuit for budgets and accounting.

Resources: *Policies*

Available on the departments network shared drive for all staff is internal documentation. This includes specific documentation related to the process of developing and proposing new courses. These resources were unknown by several staff members and were not introduced to the Director of Continuing Education after his hiring (UNC Charlotte Continuing Education, 2006).

Resources: *Staff*

The department's staff is broken down into two segments: (1) Program Development Staff which includes Program Directors and the Marketing Manager and, (2) Support Staff who report to the Director of Operations and includes Accounting, Payroll, Registration, Engagement Communications, Information Technology and additional Program Support roles.

Communication among the program development staff is frequent. Team meetings are scheduled once per week. One-on-one meetings are also held on a weekly basis. There are also meetings held weekly with marketing and engagement managers.

The support staff, on the other hand, operates slightly differently. The Director of Operations has an open-door policy and will listen to any immediate concerns of the support staff as they arise. Meetings are not held on a set weekly basis, instead they are held as-needed.

Gap Analysis

The Director of Operations within UNC Charlotte Continuing Education has acknowledged that the process for creating new programs needs streamlining as well as proper adoption among unit staff. There is concern that should the existing process continue without intervention, this will impede the ability to improve existing issues. As such they are serving as the sponsor of this Human Performance project.

An analysis of the existing process for the development and implementation of new non-credit programs showed multiple gaps (see Table 1) based on the program development and support staff survey results (See Appendix D for a list of survey results).

Gaps were specifically identified in the transition from program conceptualization to public offering. Issues that need improvement include consistency, student satisfaction, and stress of staff members. Additionally, the improvement of this process could lead to a possible increase of program revenue.

Table 1: Gap Analysis	
Optimal Performance	Actual Performance
Support staff has knowledge of upcoming certificate and course launches	Support staff is not notified until launch for certain certificates and/or courses
Marketing and Communications have time to develop support plans for new launch and market early	Not enough time is given to market new programs prior to the program launch
Limited edits are needed after final approvals	IT makes constant edits to certificates and specific courses after final approval and 'go live'

Final approvals are smooth and approved within a known time on proposal	Final approvals at times can be delayed or suffer from poor launches
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Cause Analysis

The department has a skilled and highly capable workforce. They also possess the technology needed to successfully complete the workflow process of new program creation. Taking into consideration data collected within each portion of the performance analysis, three possible causes for the performance gap have been identified:

- Process guidelines may be outdated and may not be appropriately utilized by all staff members
 - The current process guidelines for using Destiny One are nearly a decade old (see Environmental Analysis). It seems as though program directors are following these guidelines to some degree, but that support staff are not completely aware of the full workflow.
- Communication between program directors and support staff regarding new non-curriculum program specifications may be unclear
 - Communication of information regarding new programs may lack the appropriate level of detail needed by both program directors and support staff
- Communication between program directors and support staff may not be taking place at the appropriate point in time
 - Information regarding new programs may not be accessible to support staff at a soon enough time within the workflow process

Each of these causes play an important role in the gaps discussed in the previous section and have been used as the foundation for the interventions discussed in the Intervention Selection and Feasibility section below.

Methods of Data Collection

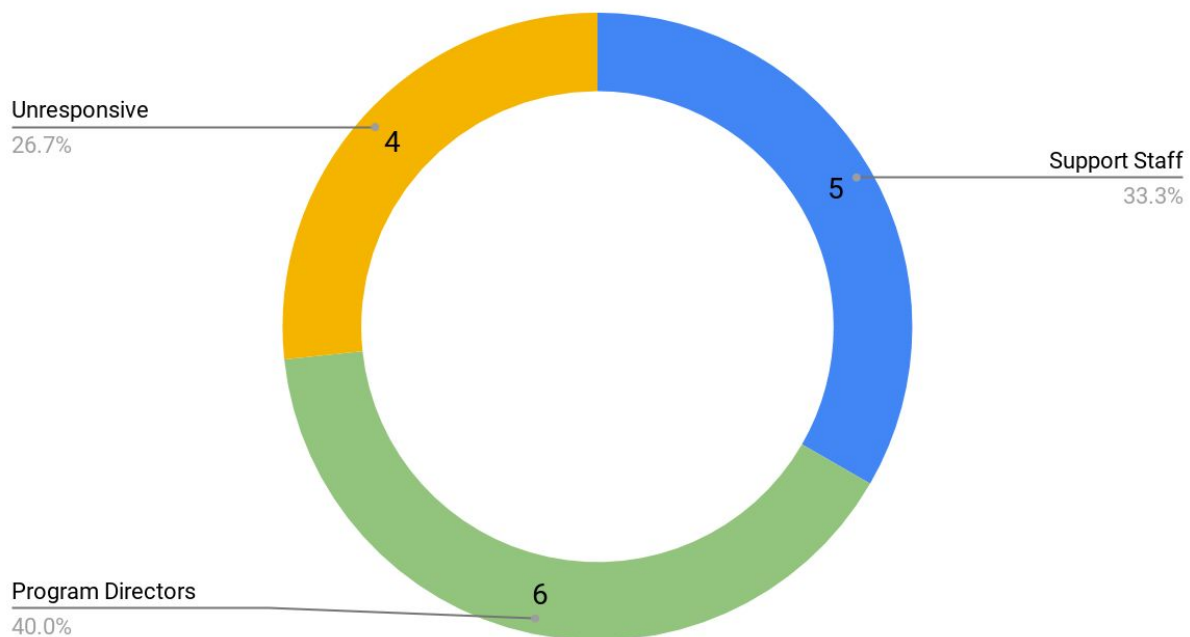
Survey via Google Forms

In the first phase of data gathering utilized surveys were sent to program development staff as well as support staff due to the impact on the new course proposal process has on the department.

Both surveys asked the majority of the same questions, however the survey given to department development staff (and Directors) asked two additional questions in regards to the vision and values of the organization. (See Appendix D for a list of survey questions.)

Surveys were developed using Google Forms and were distributed to respondents via email. Utilizing Google Forms as a survey tool offered a cost-effective and time-effective method for collecting data. Respondents were given five business days to respond. Participation in the survey was optional, and all respondents were kept anonymous. At 73%, the overall response rate for both surveys was excellent (see Figure 1 below). Individually, the survey response rates were 86% (for the survey given to department development staff) and 62% (for the survey given to support staff).

Figure 1: Overall Survey Response Rates (data includes all surveys)



Informal Interviews

Following initial data collection via surveys, it was determined that additional information was needed from support staff. Survey information from support staff was lacking the level of detail desired and therefore left additional questions. Informal interviews were held using a series of follow-up questions around determined gaps from the initial survey (See Appendix D for Informal Surveys).

These interviews were held with registration staff, engagement communications staff, and program support staff during business hours. The interviews took place at times when staff indicated that they had time to dedicate to a brief conversation. The aim of this was to ensure that the interview process would not be intrusive to their regular work.

Common themes emerged as a result of these interviews, which included: (1) expressed need for communication during the development process, (2) a designated 'launch' and a 'seat at the table' in order to communicate logistical concerns. Identifying these themes is helpful to the overall analysis of the project. Because support staff are one of the two main groups of staff members who are directly affected by the program proposal process it was important to get as much input as possible.

Documentation Investigation

In addition to in-person meetings and collecting surveys from Continuing Education employees, data was also gathered from secondary sources. These include documentation provided by the department (e.g. Redacted Continuing Education Organization Chart and outdated process documentation that was no longer being used). In addition to the above mentioned documentation, the department's web page also provided additional information about the department, and gave a general understanding of the scope of course offerings available.

Analysis

Data and information discovered throughout the performance analysis process shows that UNC Charlotte Continuing Education has an abundance of resources at their disposal. These resources include an array of technology used by staff to fulfill work related responsibilities, and personnel resources (skilled workforce) as well. They market their courses to a variety of non degree-seeking students, so their location in Charlotte's uptown Center City building puts them at an advantage for this and is the ideal location for direct access to business clients that are located in Charlotte (uptown is a centralized location).

Conclusion

Overall, the gaps identified have to do with the need for process standardization and communication. Additionally, the process will need to be adopted and utilized by both segments of the larger department (program development and support staff). Survey results as well as current process documentation show that there is a process in place but that that process is not well-identified (particularly by support staff) or followed by all staff members.

Intervention Selection and Feasibility

Results of the performance analysis above show that there is a lack of communication between the different departments in order to successfully launch a new program. The lack of operating as a cohesive unit is causing frustration among the employees and

creating an environment where it's hard for individuals to support the team effort. We have identified four intervention suggestions:

1. Documentation of a new process for new program proposals
2. Provide training for all staff on the new documentation and process once specifics have been identified
3. Creation of a gantt chart as a supplemental tool to be used along with the program proposal documentation
4. Kickoff celebration to introduce new programs when they are ready to be implemented

First, we propose the development of standardized documentation for a new program proposal process. Documentation will set a standard of performance for employees involved in launching a new program, and institutionalize a new approach moving forward. It has the potential to support a culture that values written and documented processes and effective means of communication. Additionally, the new process needs to be easily accessible to all members of the organization. It should be housed on the shared network drive where employees collaborate on projects. A sample outline for the documentation process has been created based on the findings from the performance analysis (See Appendix A). Minimal resources are necessary to implement this solution. It will require a series of meetings to analyze, design, develop, implement, and evaluate the desired process. The process should be designed in a collaborative format with department leadership.

Second, in order to transition to implementing the new process, we suggest training. Training needs to be conducted to ensure adoption of the new process. UNC Charlotte Continuing Education has the resources in-house to develop live-instructor led training, or computer-based training. Either option would be effective, but computer-based training would be optimal if time away from work is a factor. If not, we recommend live training which allows the employees to interact with each other and also have time for discussion. Once the new documentation process is developed, training should be provided to existing staff so that everyone is on the same page. Training should also be provided for any staff who may join the team in the future.

Third, in order to help ensure that certain pieces of the program proposal process are occurring at the correct point in time, we suggest the use of a gantt chart (or other timeline tool). The cause analysis for this project has shown that communication between program directors and support staff may not be taking place at appropriate points in time. A gantt chart would be a useful tool in helping both program directors and support staff to communicate information at critical points in time. For example, this timeline should identify who is responsible for specific tasks, at what time, and what the

procedure is for passing the task on when the time comes. This timeline should be created with stakeholder needs in mind as well as follow the UNC Charlotte academic calendar (specifically regarding marketing timelines and registration windows).

Lastly, we recommend a formal kickoff celebration for new programs. Program launches in the past has been a cause for stress for the support staff. The lack of communication building up to the launch of a new program creates disorganization and uncertainty at the launch date. With a new process in place, it will instill confidence in the employees that a program will launch successfully. It will give the employees time to reflect on their win of a successful launch, build more team unity, and institutionalize a culture of creating effective processes.

Table 2: Feasibility Analysis

Suggested Solution	Feasibility
Standardized documentation process	Creating a standardized documentation process is considered to be a highly feasible option. UNC Charlotte Continuing Education currently has access to a variety of tools to make this possible, therefore it is not expected that any additional resources will need to be acquired. The Department can leverage current access to tools such as the shared network drive and Monday.com to create a standardized documentation process that is accessible by everyone.
Training	Developing and delivering training for the new program documentation process once it is delivered is considered to be a highly feasible option. It is not expected that any additional resources will need to be acquired. However, the Department will need to decide who will take ownership of creating and delivering the training to existing employees and any new employees that may join the team in the future.
Gantt Chart	Creating a gantt chart to reflect the timeline of a standardized documentation process is considered to be a highly feasible option. UNC Charlotte Continuing Education currently has access to a variety of tools to

	make this possible, therefore it is not expected that any additional resources will need to be acquired. The Department can leverage current access to tools such as Microsoft Visio or Excel, or Monday.com. Monday.com also has a variety of built-in tools such as a timeline view, task assignment, file uploading, calendar views, and kanban charts to assist with keeping processes organized.
Kickoff Celebrations	Planning and implementing kickoff celebrations for new programs is considered to be a highly feasible option. However, the Department will need to decide who will take ownership of this phase of the process.

Final Implications and Recommendations

It is recommended that all of the intervention solutions mentioned above be utilized. They were chosen because we believe they will each play an important role in helping to alleviate some of the gaps currently experienced by the UNC Charlotte Continuing Education department when it comes to new program proposals. That said, the most important solution is to determine a standardized process for new program proposals and to implement it effectively. The additional three solutions that have been proposed (training, utilizing a gantt chart, and kickoff celebrations) are dependent on this first solution.

Additionally, in order for these solutions to be fully effective, the new process must be fully adopted by the department as a unit. If participation or buy-in is lacking from any area, it is likely to have a negative effect on the overall impact of a new program proposal process. This is one of the reasons we have suggested hosting program kickoff celebrations when a new proposal has been approved and successfully added to the list of courses offered. These should be designed to alert everyone that the process has been completed for a new program in a highly positive way that will help cultivate camaraderie within the department.

Lastly, the feasibility of each is determined to be high (see Table 2 in the Intervention Selection and Feasibility section above), meaning that we believe each of the interventions have the potential to be fully accomplished with the existing resources already available to UNC Charlotte Continuing Education. Procuring additional resources may be possible (i.e. outsourcing the creation of training materials), however

it is not deemed to be necessary. Though time may be considered an obstacle, fiscal and technological resources are already in the department's possession.

Conclusion

To conclude, after a thorough performance analysis was conducted, it was determined that several performance gaps exist within the current process used for new program proposals within the UNC Charlotte Continuing Education department. It is recommended that the department corrects these gaps to better internal stakeholder (staff) working conditions and increase external stakeholders (students) satisfaction. In turn this could lead to better program deployments with an increase in return on investment.

Gaps Identified:

- Lack of new program knowledge for support staff (specifically regarding general course information and course launch timelines)
- Lack of time for the marketing staff to adequately support marketing efforts (which in turn help to recruit students)
- Editing to courses after they are live
- Delayed approval times for newly proposed courses

Causes of Gaps:

- Outdated process guidelines
- Unclear communication between program directors and support staff
- Ill-timed communication between program directors and support staff

Recommended Interventions:

- A standardized documentation process be designed and implemented across all areas of the department
- Training on the new process be provided to all areas of the department
- A gantt chart be utilized to help visualize the timeline of the new process and provide accountability
- Kickoff celebrations be implemented in order to foster camaraderie and bring awareness to newly approved programs that have successfully been implemented via the new process

References

- UNC Charlotte Continuing Education (2017). *About Us*. Retrieved from <https://continuinged.UNC Charlotte.edu/aboutus/>
- UNC Charlotte Continuing Education (2006) *Documentation for new course proposal processes*. Retrieved from UNC Charlotte Continuing Education Department Shared Network Drive.
- Van Tiem, D. M., Moseley, J. L., & Dessinger, J. C. (2012). *Fundamentals of performance technology: Optimizing results through people, process, and organizations*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer/ISPI.

Appendix A: Implementation Discussion and Recommendations

It is recommended that all of the intervention solutions described above be implemented in order to achieve maximum effectiveness, though this phase of the HPT model is left up to stakeholders within the UNC Charlotte Continuing Education department.

The feasibility of each is determined to be high (see Table 2 above), meaning that we believe each of the interventions have the potential to be fully accomplished with the existing resources already available to UNC Charlotte Continuing Education. Procuring additional resources may be possible (i.e. outsourcing the creation of training materials), however it is not deemed to be necessary.

Proposed Proposal Process



[View Full Graphic](#)

Appendix B: Evaluation Recommendations

In addition to implementing the three solutions recommended above, we also recommend evaluating the progress of each over time. Doing so will help the department to determine the overall impact of using the interventions recommended and adjust their approach as needed. Possible metrics for evaluation include staff perceptions of overall effectiveness, overall staff satisfaction, adoption rates of the new process, and notable changes in recruitment and retention rates.

As with the implementation process, it will be up to the department to conduct appropriate evaluations. It is recommended that, once implemented, the new program proposal process be evaluated at least once within the first year on both a certificate and a single course proposal.

We also recommend that confirmative evaluation methods be used. According to Van Tiem, Moseley, and Dessinger, the purpose of confirmative evaluation is:

“...to provide continuous quality control over the life-cycle of the performance improvement package...”

Additionally, confirmative evaluation “...identifies, explains, and confirms the long-term or enduring efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and value of the intervention. It judges the actual and perceived value to the user in terms of competence and ‘usefulness’ and the impact on the organization in terms of performance improvement, return on investment (ROI), and other measurable factors.”

(Van Tiem, Moseley, and Dessinger, 2012, p. 555)

It is important to track the long-term impact of interventions that are implemented in order to determine whether or not they were successful and to what degree. Below, Table 3 lists possible data collection methods for each of the metrics mentioned above.

Table 3: Suggested Confirmative Evaluation Metrics	
Metric	Possible Method(s) of Data Collection
Overall staff perceptions (effectiveness and satisfaction)	• Survey • Interview • Focus Group
Adoption Rates	• Tracking which departments within Continuing Education utilize the new process (this should be built-in

	to the new process)
Recruitment and Retention	Tracking rates of students registering and remaining registered for new courses that have utilized the new program proposal process

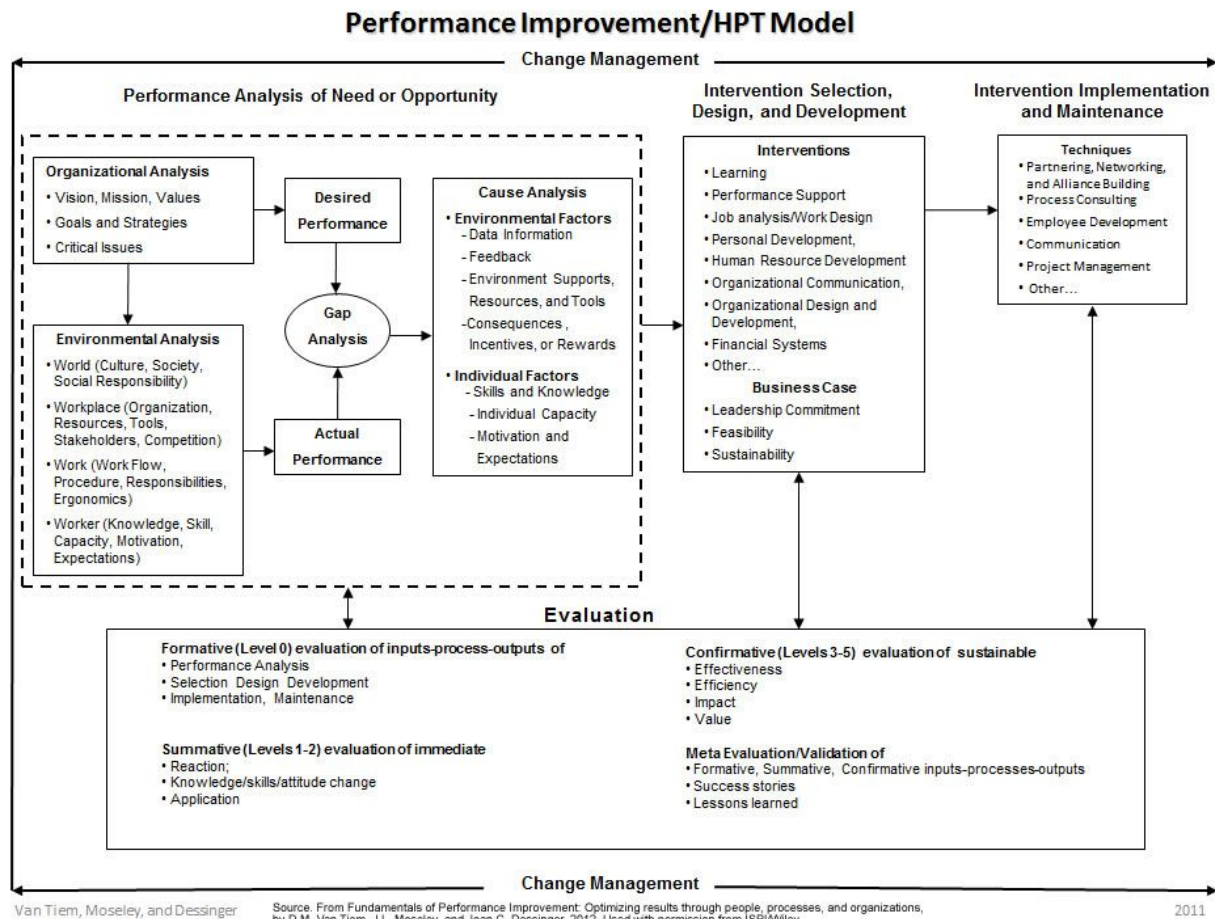
While there are several models of evaluation to use, in this case we recommend Kirkpatrick's "Four Levels of Evaluation" model (Van Tiem, Moseley, and Dessinger, 2012, pp. 532-533). This model has been traditionally used to measure learning outcomes, however it translates well to measuring performance outcomes as well. Figure 2 shows a depiction of the Kirkpatrick model, which can be used with the metrics above.

Figure 2.



Appendix C: ISPI Performance Improvement/HPT Model

The ISPI Performance Improvement/HPT Model was used as the framework for this project. This model and its use is depicted and discussed in depth by Van Tiem, Moseley, and Dessinger (2012).



Appendix D: Survey Materials

Digital Survey Forms

Both surveys (one for department development staff and one for support staff) are available in Google Forms:

- [View Leadership Survey](#)
- [View Support Survey](#)

Digital Survey Results

The full survey results are available in Google Data Studio:

- [View HPT Results in Google Data Studio](#)

Informal In-person Support Staff Follow Up Interview

- [View Informal Questions](#)