



Long-Term Professional Development: The impact of manager training on NSO performance

Patti Millar and Julie Stevens
Centre for Sport Capacity
Brock University, St. Catharines, ON

Perhaps now more than ever, with the introduction of the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model, Canada's sport managers require a new set of capabilities. Professional development initiatives can address these new challenges in Canadian sport because they improve the performance of both sport managers and sport organizations.

The Problem

Canadian national sport organizations (NSO) are consistently under pressure to implement management practices that ensure organizational effectiveness and maintain a strategic planning approach (Papadimitriou, 2007).

The Canadian sport system, as a whole, is overwhelmingly devoted to the performance of athletes and coaches, and as a result, fails to recognize the performance of sport managers and their organizations (Senior Leaders Forum, 2008). Current funding structures and evaluation initiatives focus on the on-the-field performances of athletes and coaches and create a perpetual cycle that neglects off-the-field performers and the internal processes of sport organizations. The lack of focus on the off-the-field components of performance undermines the importance of the managerial aspects of sport and presents a barrier for continual workforce development opportunities for Canada's sport managers.

As a result of the overemphasis upon on-the-field performance, workforce development opportunities are limited, leaving Canada's sport managers with inadequate opportunities for improvement (Senior Leaders Forum, 2008). According to Stuart (2009), if the NSO leaders:

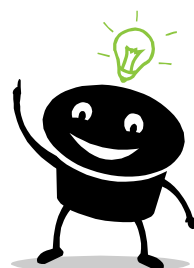
Running Canada's high performance sport systems are **not provided** with an appropriate **framework for dynamic organizational capacity development**...the strong possibility exists that when Canadian high performance ath-

did you know?

Training NSO managers will improve both their performance and their NSO's performance.

letes compete on international and world stages their **preparations will not be as complete** as they could and should be (p. 1).

Unfortunately, within the context of sport organizations, human resource management training practices are rarely applied and little support for formal structures of training and the facilitation of employee development exist within sport organizations (Doherty, 1998). Further, if Canada's sport managers are not provided with continual development opportunities, the strong possibility exists that NSO high performance and development programs will not be as successful as they should be.

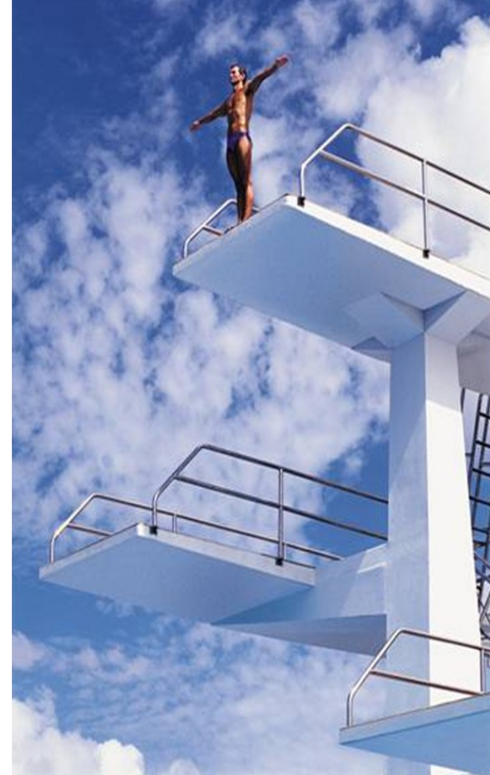


Long-Term Professional Development (LTPD) can improve organizational performance!

“National sport organization managers are in a state of readiness. They are eager to develop their competencies and seek opportunities to improve their efficiency”

— Bell-Laroche, 2010

The mentality within Canadian NSOs is shifting to a more process-focused approach towards the development of athletes and programs, as seen in the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) initiative (Canadian Sport Centres, 2010). This process-focused mentality can also be appropriately applied to the managerial side of the sport system. Athletes go through a progression of skill development before reaching the high performance level. Similarly, managers go through various stages of career progression. Just as stages of athlete development are outlined in the LTAD model, stages of professional development could be appropriately outlined in a Long-Term Professional Development (LTPD) model. Similarly, the life-long involvement that is promoted by the Canadian Sport for Life movement can be mirrored with a Sport Leaders for Life movement that promotes and focuses upon continual workforce development and involvement in Canadian sport.



Training in National Sport Organizations: Examining the Impact on Individual and Organizational Performance

Research Purpose

This neglect of training practices in the Canadian sport system and the lack of research surrounding training and its evaluation in sport organizations are the inspiration behind this study. The purpose of this study is to examine how training influences the individual performance of sport managers and translates to the overall performance of national sport organizations. The Risk Management Workshop (RMW) provided the context for this research project. The RMW is an expert-led workshop that allows a national sport organization's task group to identify and assess risks facing the organization, as well as develop strategies to evaluate, treat, and monitor those risks (Bell-Laroche, 2007).

Following a longitudinal design, data were collected from five NSOs (N=22) that took part in the Risk Management Workshop, in which participants completed a survey prior to attending the workshop (PRE), immediately after the workshop (POST1), and three months after the workshop (POST2). The survey included measures on learning (understanding and applicability), individual performance, and organizational performance. The survey also included three mediating factors (motivation to transfer, training design, and organizational climate). These outcome and mediating variables have been identified as defining components in training evaluation in order to thoroughly capture the impact of training on performance.

Results

The results demonstrate, first, that the RMW influenced the understanding and applicability of the material discussed in the workshop, the individual's performance of the various risk management practices and strategies, and the overall performance of the organization. Second, the results reveal that learning, individual performance, and organizational performance are positively correlated, meaning that what a NSO manager learns from training is directly related to the NSO manager's performance and the overall performance of the NSO. These findings generate important discussion regarding the nature of the changes in performance outcomes that result from training transfer.

“Training and development are critical dimensions of a strategic approach to the management of human resources” (Taylor, Doherty, & McGraw, 2008)

the duration of performance change

As displayed in Figure 1, the immediate changes that were witnessed in the outcome variables were maintained over the three month time period. Despite the slight, non-significant, decrease in each of the variables, the findings demonstrate that the RMW had a sustained impact on the understanding and applicability (learning) of the risk management concepts, the individual performance of sport managers, and the organizational performance of each NSO.

the sequence of performance change

In terms of sequence, immediately following the workshop, the understanding and individual performance scores were significantly correlated and, at the three-month time-series, understanding and applicability were both significantly correlated to individual and organizational performance (see Figure 2). This indicates that over time, learning (understanding and applicability) leads to improved individual performance and, onto, improved organizational performance, which suggests there is a sequence to the changes in performance outcomes that arise from training transfer. These findings support the literature that identifies a progression from elevated knowledge of the new behaviour to the actual performance and preference of the new behaviour to the normative and value consensus of the new behaviour at the organizational level (Goodman & Dean, 1982; Kraiger, Ford, & Salas, 1993).

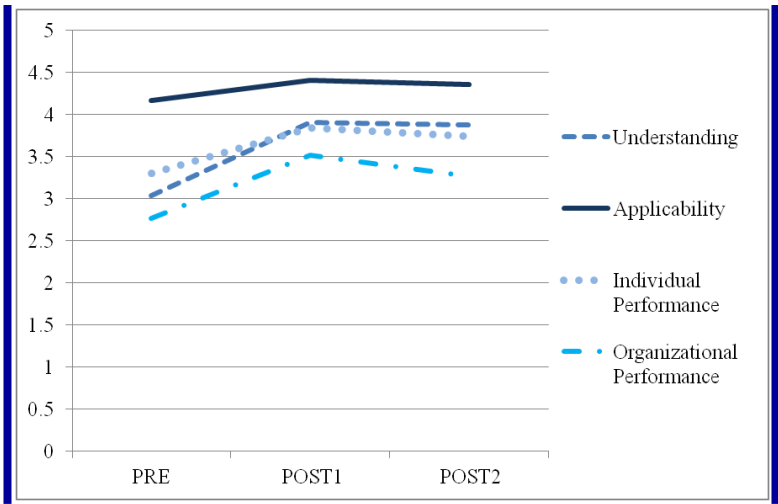


Figure 1. Mean Scores for the Outcome Variables

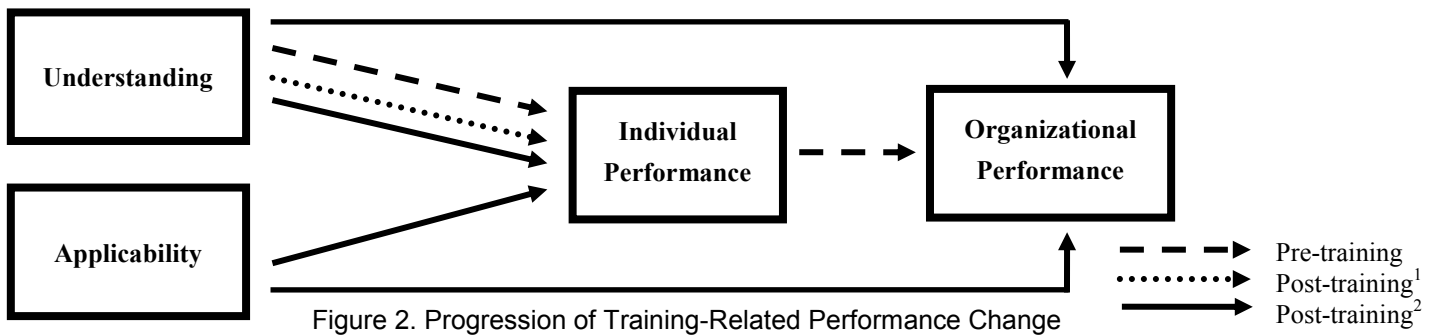


Figure 2. Progression of Training-Related Performance Change

role of the sport manager

Although motivation to transfer was not a significant mediator between the learning measures and individual performance, the results of this study still offer insight into the individual's role in the transfer of training. The results demonstrate that participants were most motivated to transfer the training content to their jobs immediately after training (POST1). The reasoning behind these levels of motivation can be analyzed through the use of expectancy theory. Expectancy theory attempts to describe the processes through which individuals are motivated by the expected outcomes of behaviour (Smith et al., 2008). In the case of this study, motivation was shaped by the expectation that training would lead to highly desired improved performance. More specifically, this expectation of improved performance existed, and as a result, increased the initial level of motivation towards the training program. Based on the results of this study, it is clear that expectations surrounding the outcomes and valence of training provide insight into the motivation of the participants and the role that individual's play in the transfer of training.

role of the sport organization

For training to have an impact at an organizational level, the environment within the organization must be supportive of the changes in behaviour. While organizational climate was not a significant mediator between understanding or applicability and individual performance, relationships involving organizational climate did exist at all three time measures. The results demonstrate that the NSOs were supportive of the changes introduced through the RMW and resulted in improved organizational performance. As organizational adaptation theory suggests, the NSOs transformed their structures and procedures to adapt with the changes introduced through the RMW. Evidently, a supportive work environment is important for the application of newly acquired skills.

Implications

INVEST IN YOUR STAFF

Participation in the RMW had a direct impact on the understanding of the risk management strategies, the individual performance of the sport managers, and overall organizational performance of their NSOs. Evidently, investing in HR within an NSO plays an important role in improving individual and organizational performance.

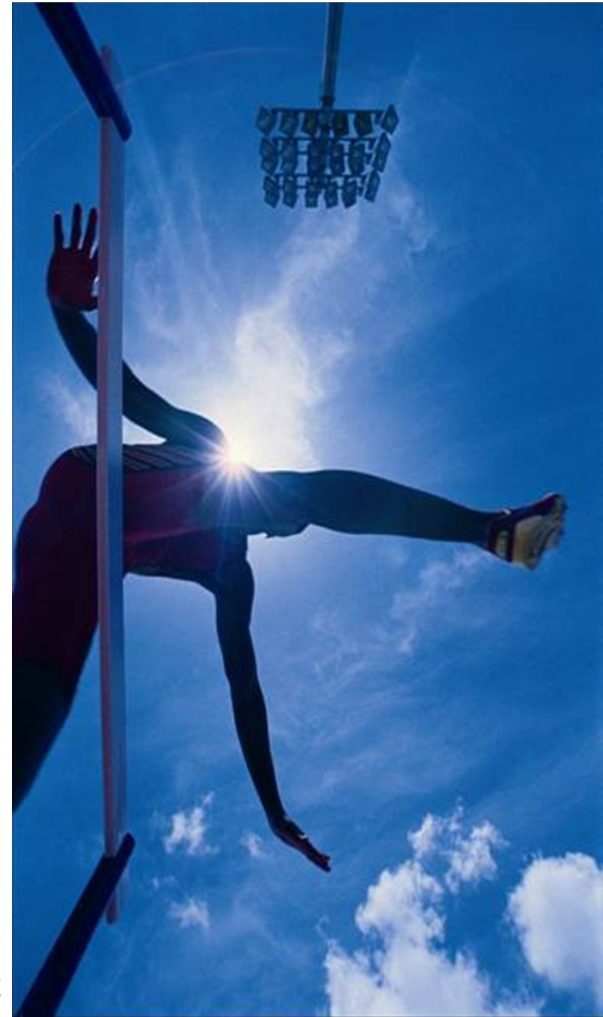
COMMIT TO LONG-TERM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN YOUR NSO

This study highlights long-term professional development as a strategy that may increase and sustain “off-the-field” NSO performance.

TRAINING AND MANAGING CHANGE ARE CONNECTED

The RMW is ultimately aimed at triggering organizational change as it seeks to train sport leaders about how to better manage their organization. The LTAD initiative has introduced a shift in the administration of sport, specifically the skills and knowledge that sport managers require in order to effectively implement the LTAD.

Now, more than ever, the training and development of the amateur sport workforce is integral to the success of all levels of sport in Canada!



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