Business Problem: A technology help desk manager in a Boston-area university observed a dip in students and faculty's average customer service ratings. On further analysis, the manager found that students and faculty who called the technology help desk for support were put on hold for a long time before service. In some cases, students and faculty abandoned the calls after waiting for a while (perhaps in frustration).

Further investigation revealed that the average number of calls taken by the call center in a day is much lower than the average calls received per day. In addition, the calls taken per help desk agent per hour are just 50% of their capacity based on industry averages. The manager realized that the help desk agents had issues with university software and product knowledge on further study. They routinely put students and faculty on hold as they referred to product or software documentation before responding. The manager ascertained that the critical reason leading to long hold time and eventually low call handling rate was lack of knowledge from the help desk agents. Training the technology help desk staff on the university software products following this analysis and finding was decided.

ADDIE Model: I used ADDIE to create and train the university technology help desk agents. The ADDIE model supports a robust approach to determining training needs, developing relevant interventions, and evaluating outcomes.

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Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate

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Purpose: At the outset, it helps to bear in mind that at the heart of every training program lies its "core purpose" – the primary reason the training program exists (e.g., solving a specific performance problem). In the above example, the purpose of the training program is to enhance the student and faculty satisfaction rating.

Each of the ADDIE process steps is to be devoted to the purpose of the training program. This results in an effective training program that addresses the needs from three different perspectives: university, technology department, and individual helpdesk agent perspectives.

Analyze: The Analyze phase is the foundational phase in the process of structuring university or corporate L&D interventions. A practical analysis leads to creating an efficient program and one that is aligned. This makes it easier to engage from all three critical perspectives (company, team, and individual). This phase is also often referred to as "training needs analysis."

The analysis phase involves establishing the problem to which the proposed training intervention is a solution. In this phase, we collect data to recognize and estimate gaps between actual and desired performance levels (in the above example, the desired number of calls that the agent is expected to make versus the number of calls each agent is currently making). A needs analysis will also enlist other potential performance issues to determine which training could solve. For example, the low performance may be due to poor employee morale owing to disappointment resulting from the distribution of bonuses. This is not something that training can necessarily solve.

Design: In the design phase of ADDIE, training professionals need to apply vision and creativity. It fundamentally involves coming up with two statements. The first, a brief statement, depicted the purpose and reason why the program exists. This will also contain the subject matter, duration, and target audience information. Secondly, during the design stage, we develop learning objectives, particularly describing what participants will learn and do as a result of the program. Care must be taken to keep the objectives measurable as much as possible. For example, "after the training, you will be able to listen empathetically" is a bit ambiguous and therefore not measurable. However, this could be restated thus: "After the training, you will be able to enlist and define the four principles of empathetic listening." Creating learning objectives using Bloom's Taxonomy will develop authentically and measured learning.

Develop: The Develop stage is the critical pre-execution stage of training and development. As the saying goes, "proper preparation prevents poor performance." The Develop phase of training and development involves the identification/creation, grouping, and sequencing of Learning Objects (or LO's) for each training program.

The goal of the development phase is to finalize the content and the approach for the proposed training programs. The approach may include one or more modalities, including eLearning, blended, On the Job Training (OJT), activities, simulation, etc. The output of the Develop stage must ideally consist of every aspect/component/tool necessary for delivering the prescribed training, including job aids, contents, handouts, graphs, images, videos, etc.

Implement: The Implementation or the execution phase of training is the most visible of the phases in the ADDIE process and the juncture where the work thus far starts impacting the organization. Often this is the phase where the pressure to contribute value – because things are in full public view – is felt. However, it is often too late to deliver a profound impact at this stage (if adequate preparation planning has not been done in the Analyze, Design, and Delivery phases). In other words, it is the quality and comprehensiveness of effort invested in the previous phases that will lead to success in
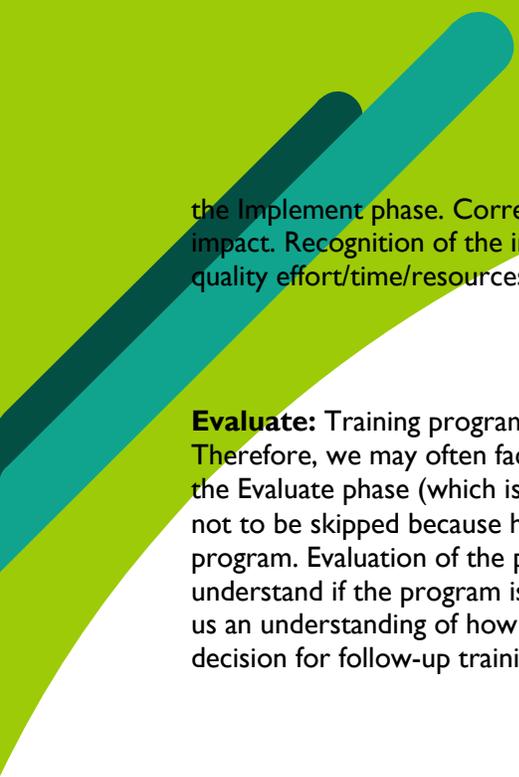
the Implement phase. Corrections possible in the implementation phase would be minimal and have less impact. Recognition of the importance of the Implement phase is demonstrated in actually investing quality effort/time/resources in the previous phases.

Evaluate: Training programs are often a sizeable investment of time, effort, and other resources. Therefore, we may often face the pressure to conclude the process after delivery. However, the Evaluate phase (which is the last step in the ADDIE model) is of critical importance and, therefore, not to be skipped because here is where we can gather an assessment of the effectiveness of our program. Evaluation of the program helps us identify the strengths, areas of improvement as well as understand if the program is meeting the objectives set in the Design phase. In addition, it can also give us an understanding of how different participants perceived value from the program. This could lead to a decision for follow-up training.