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# Meeting the Communication Challenges of Training

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## MEETING THE COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES OF TRAINING

*Jeremy P. Fyke and Patrice M. Buzzanell*

Training continues to be a priority in organizations and is vital for overall human resource management (HRM). Aligned with its charge to recruit, motivate, develop, and retain individuals, training provides one means by which HRM plays an important role in improving organizational processes and outcomes. Through training, HRM increases employee value for present and future opportunities and needs. Increasing employee value may be justified by assuming that individuals have the right to enrich their skill sets as part of their employment contracts and that organizations have obligations to their stakeholders, including clients and employees, to engage not only in continuous improvement of technical work but also of human assets. Consequently, academicians and practitioners continue to explore the dynamics, processes, and outcomes involved in training individuals. Although it is recognized that HRM personnel need various communication competencies (Rothwell, 1996), much less is known about communication approaches to training and the HRM function. Given that training literature rarely investigates its communicative content and activity, communication researchers have much to contribute to the improvement of this HRM process (Messersmith, Keyton, & Bisel, 2009).

We address central issues facing organizations and HRM professionals with respect to training, beginning with an explanation of the communication-as-constitutive-of-organizing perspective that forms the foundation of our chapter. Then, we consider the trainer, trainee, and training itself as three aspects that any organization must consider in training.

### **The Case for a Communicative Approach to Training**

Given today's business realities of tighter career progression, budget constraints, hypercompetitive business environments, and market-driven philosophies, "training for training's sake" is a thing of the past (McGuire, Cross, & O'Donnell, 2005). Hence, this is an ideal moment for reappraising training theory and practice and for considering the central role that communication plays in creating and sustaining organizational viability. In this section we consider the important role of communication underlying instruction.

Training "is the process of developing skills in order to perform a specific job or task more effectively" (Beebe, Mottet, & Roach, 2013, p. 5). Training involves "the systematic approach to

affecting individuals' knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to improve individual, team, and organizational effectiveness" (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009, p. 452). According to the most recent industry report from the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), U.S. organizations spent approximately \$156.2 billion on employee learning in 2011, amounting to \$1,182 per individual learner (Miller, 2012). Of the \$156.2 billion, \$87.5 billion (56 percent) was spent internally on training employees, \$46.9 billion (30 percent) on external services, and \$21.9 billion (14 percent) on tuition reimbursement. Given that most funds are spent internally on training, this HRM function remains paramount and is perceived as critical in business.

Many of the skills involved in effective training are communicative. Trainers need to actively engage their adult learners for training to be successful and for commitment to practice to take place (Greene, 2003). Furthermore, training must be audience centered and is, therefore, a rhetorical process that requires trainers to adapt and adjust instruction to trainees' current capacities (Beebe et al., 2013). We argue that communication theory and practice stands to contribute greatly to understandings of the training function of HRM.

Overall, training theory and practice is premised on communication as a tool to transmit content in order to enhance successful outcomes. Training suffers from a reliance on the communication-as-transmission, or conduit, model (Axley, 1984). Regarding communication as merely the vehicle for disseminating information severely underestimates the influence of communication in organizational life and limits the potential of communication to simply a vehicle or tool for accomplishing other ends. In the training context, this means that communication is one of many organizational processes for which training could be provided, such as customer service, decision making, teamwork, and conflict management—all common foci of training efforts. Thus, the conduit perspective fails to recognize the central role that communication plays in all of the aforementioned organizational processes.

When the communication-as-constitutive-of-organizing (CCO; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2006; Putnam & Nicotera, 2009) approach, or, in our case, communication-as-constitutive-of-training approach, is adopted, the focus shifts to how training is formed and made sensible in context through communication. The difference between the communication-as-conduit and communication-as-constitutive approaches is theoretically and generally helpful for HRM and training specifically. For instance, the CCO perspective realizes that meanings are actively produced, reproduced, maintained, and resisted in and through interactions (Jian, Schmisser, & Fairhurst, 2008). From needs assessments through training delivery, trainers can capitalize on the negotiation of meaning that is ongoing among organization members. For example, trainers do more than simply explain a process or procedure; through techniques such as narratives and framing, they can help trainees understand how their learning fits into their daily work lives.

Trainers could adopt audience-centered models that foreground the meaning-making efforts of trainees within the particular contexts for which they are trained as well as larger contexts (e.g., careers). If trainees are struggling to adopt new techniques learned in training, a communication-centered approach can tap into the lived experiences of workers and explore root causes of problems. Such an approach that asks questions such as "Why do you think that happened?" and "How did you respond?" and "Why are changes being implemented?" attends to members' sensemaking of training and of the communication that takes place about it (Mills, 2009). Furthermore, as CCO integrates organizing and communicating, it enables sustained focus on the ongoing process of creating, maintaining, and integrating training aspects in situ. As communication as constitutive of training, HRM can adapt more readily to changing needs and interests of trainers and trainees.

## The Trainer

Despite much research on training outcomes at individual and organizational levels, few studies beyond simple self-report and retrospective measures examine the extent to which the personal qualities and skills of the trainer actually result in lasting change. Core interpersonal communication skills for successful trainers include relationship and team building, listening, questioning, and engaging in dialogue. Effective trainers view their roles as facilitating rather than teaching or instructing—pulling “a message out of people [rather] than . . . put[ting] one in them” (Beebe, 2007, p. 251), thereby drawing out issues most germane to clients’ working lives. In this vein, listening skills are a core competency because trainers must “listen well enough to identify and address unasked questions based on dialogue during training” (Ricks, Williams, & Weeks, 2008, p. 603). Effective trainers use narratives, metaphors, and examples to enhance communication clarity, a key factor in learning (Daly & Vangelisti, 2003; Faylor, Beebe, Houser, & Mottet, 2008). From a CCO perspective, these various linguistic devices allow trainers to tap into “the symbols that make up the day-to-day life world of communicators” (Meyer, 2002) and help them not only connect content to their learning environments but (re)create their workplaces.

Effective trainers are adept at building relationships with trainees to establish partnerships and safe spaces for learning. One way of envisioning trainer–trainee relationships is through the working alliance (WA; Bordin, 1979). The WA stems from clinical psychology where mutual trust, acceptance, and openness enable (a) responding with empathy; (b) expressing genuine, spontaneous feelings expressions; and (c) reassuring clients that they are free to terminate the relationship when ready (Gelso & Hayes, 1998, as cited in Latham & Heslin, 2003). These three WA conditions can help constitute meaningful trainer–trainee relationships (Latham & Heslin, 2003). However, the WA has not been empirically tested, and specific ways to enhance trainer–trainee relationships have been largely ignored (Latham & Heslin, 2003). For example, research has yet to identify a method for training trainers to behave supportively (Latham & Heslin, 2003). Therefore, exploration of the communicative abilities requisite for establishing the WA would be useful. This would facilitate the adoption and testing of a communication social support framework (Albrecht, Burleson, & Goldsmith, 1994; Burleson, 2003) in training contexts to investigate the impact of supportive behaviors on constituting trainer–trainee alliances.

In sum, although research has explored and, in some cases, empirically validated behaviors of effective trainers, much literature tends to be anecdotal or based on retrospective accounts (i.e., “think of the last trainer from whom you received training”). In agreement with Faylor and colleagues (2008), we recommend research designs that involve direct observation of trainee–trainer interactions. Furthermore, as training platforms continue to evolve (e.g., interactive or online formats), research could explore evolutions of trainers’ skills and sensemaking about the efficacy of such changes in light of training goals. For example, how are best practices in facilitating and providing client feedback constructed in online modes such as e-forums?

## The Trainee

Training begins by considering the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) of trainees. Given the cost of training employees (\$81 on average per learning hour in 2011; Miller, 2012), care must be taken to determine what trainees should understand, value, or be able to do upon completion of the training. As the problems facing organizations become more complex, training must scale up such that “the emphasis is on training the business rather than training individuals within it” (Talbot,

2011, p. 5). Training outcomes are dependent upon who receives the training—management or employee—as roles vary within organizations.

### ***Management Training***

Organizations believe that managers and leaders can be developed over time with quality experiences and focused learning, resulting in continual investment in management training (Allio, 2005). In 2011, managerial and supervisory training was in the top three in training content (Miller, 2012). Leading is a key component of managerial training because managers in various positions, including directors and entrepreneurs, need to be trained to not only do their jobs effectively, but also to train others to be most effective (Saks, Tamkin, & Lewis, 2011). Although communication is a core leadership competency, many training programs lack a firm grounding in communication theory (Ayman, Adams, Fisher, & Hartman, 2003). Alarming, ASTD survey data reveal that “interpersonal skills” were in the bottom three in terms of content focal area for Fortune 500 companies (Miller, 2012).

Training employees at any level is expensive, but it is especially so for managers when the cost of their time is considered (Collins & Holton, 2004). Organizations seek to reduce training costs by incorporating e-learning, in-house training, and episodic event-based training (Saks et al., 2011). Although promising, research has not explored whether these types of training can meet the challenges of developing leaders in today’s environment. For example, do virtual training episodes afford the contexts and materials that develop the ethical and legal competencies necessary today?

Scholars predict shortages of leadership talent required to meet the changing needs of businesses affected by technology, globalization, and hypercompetition. DeRue and Myers (in press) argue that scholarly literature has failed to produce results that can adequately address this talent shortage. One reason for this shortcoming includes a primary focus on individual leader development (e.g., KSAs) without exploring dynamic leader–follower processes. Communication-centered approaches to leadership see leadership as relational. For instance, Fairhurst’s (2007, 2011) work on discursive leadership and framing advocates moving past predispositional and trait-based approaches to view leadership as enacted communicatively in leader–follower relationships and as essential to sensemaking about organizational events. Scholars could design studies using Fairhurst’s (2007, 2011) scholarship as a framework considering leadership as relational and communicative.

Lastly, managerial training efforts often involve mentoring (Dominguez, 2012). Former General Electric chief executive officer Jack Welch introduced an interesting twist on classical mentoring, viz., a practice in which junior employees mentor older, experienced workers (Murphy, 2012). The purpose of reverse mentoring is knowledge sharing, typically focused on technical expertise (e.g., the use of Twitter for business purposes), as well as sharing generational perspectives (Murphy, 2012). Organizations increasingly use reverse mentoring to facilitate leadership development and help leaders connect with employees at all levels. Yet research is needed to get past anecdotal evidence supporting the merit of reverse mentoring. Research shows that high-performing companies are ones where leadership development is embedded culturally (Bersin, 2012) and leaders and employees are mentored at all levels.

### ***Employee Training***

Ostroff and Bowen (2000) provide a scheme to represent various HRM attributes that are targets of training efforts. These attributes include attitudes and motivation (e.g., greater employee

morale), performance-related behaviors (e.g., increased sales), and human capital (e.g., higher workforce KSAs). Training focused on these key areas should lead to higher organizational performance, although scant research demonstrates connections between individual and organizational outcomes of training (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009).

Research mostly confirms that trainees can experience cognitive, behavioral, and affective outcomes as training results. *Cognitive* outcomes are those that demonstrate increases in both declarative knowledge (i.e., basic ability to recall) and procedural knowledge (i.e., knowledge of how, what, and why; Ford, Kraiger, & Merritt, 2010). *Behavioral* outcomes relate to skills that are demonstrable (i.e., employees perform learned tasks more effectively). *Affective* outcomes are those that relate to levels of motivation, evaluations of the training content, and the value of training in general.

Finally, metacognition—in other words, knowledge about cognition and awareness of one's cognition (Ford et al., 2010)—offers still another outcome of training. Employees high in metacognition understand the connection between task demands and skills and can match task strategies to specific contexts (Ford et al., 2010). For instance, employees high in metacognitive abilities would be able to discontinue failing decision-making processes and opt for more effective strategies. The development of metacognition is especially important given the speed with which decisions are made in today's environment and the needs for continued experience and skill acquisition (Greene, 2003). This self-regulatory process can be developed through trainers' use of questioning, dialogue, and other communication-based strategies, a topic ripe for further research (Ford et al., 2010). Through dialogue, questioning, and reflection, trainers can stimulate a communicative environment co-constructed with trainees (Beebe, 2007) and dependent on sensemaking and mindful processing of instruction and information (Bushe & Marshak, 2009). Further research is needed to test how dialogue strategies may facilitate continual, adaptive change so employees may better be able to tap into and use their metacognitive skills in their daily work.

## The Training Process

As the nature of work continues to change, workers are expected to develop broad, agile skill sets that are crucial for their own and their organization's success (Grossman & Salas, 2011). The challenge confronting HRM is to identify whether workers possess these skills, provide learning experiences that will develop these skills, and then assure that what trainees have learned actually improves the manner in which they perform their jobs.

### ***Pre-Training: Assessing Training Needs***

The training process should begin by identifying the skills and abilities required of workers to perform organizational jobs and an assessment of whether the workforce actually possesses these requisite characteristics. Laird, Naquin, and Holton (2003) explain the various sources for revealing individual needs, including new hires, promotions, transfers, performance appraisals, new positions, and job descriptions. In terms of organizational training needs, routine management reports, changes in standards, new policies, and new products and/or services can be used along with systematic analyses of organizations' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT; Beebe et al., 2013).

Whether assessing individual or organizational needs, a communication-centered approach proposes that training should be audience centered because training is constituted and deployed relationally (Duck & McMahan, 2010). Whether training is conducted in-house or external to the

organization, HRM professionals must understand the various needs of audience members receiving training. For example, Gordon and Miller (2012), in their discussion of audience-centered performance appraisals, note that several factors should be taken into consideration: distinct characteristics of employees (e.g., cultural backgrounds); type of feedback and method of delivery (e.g., e-mail, phone) preferred by employees; and past history of interactions with employees. HRM professionals should also note that audience analysis and adaptation must be ongoing throughout training processes (Beebe et al., 2013). At an organizational level, training settings and cultural dynamics influence success. Given that training is a meaning-making process, something as simple as the room arrangement can send messages about training goals and can influence the levels of audience participation (Beebe et al., 2013; Laird et al., 2003).

Communication research contributes insights into the methods for audience analysis important for HRM professionals and researchers. Audience analysis can provide information on preferred delivery styles and methods, participation levels to be expected from audience members, organizational time investments, whether or not trainees have special needs (e.g., visual or audio impairment), and trainees' experience with particular technologies or various mediums used in the training. For the latter, the social information processing model (SIP; Fulk, Steinfield, Schmitz, & Power, 1987) identifies various factors that affect technology use, including experience with the technology and others' sensemaking about technology through interactions with coworkers. The development of models of procedural discourse—in other words, “written and spoken discourse that guides people in performing a task”—has identified a “consistent logic” that underlies the preparation of material intended to assist individuals in the adoption of new technology (Farkas, 1999, p. 42). For example, procedural discourse could be used as the basis for preparing explanations for a university professor about how to upload grades to a new course management system. Research applying SIP and procedural discourse can affect training content, discourse, and materialities through adaptations to trainee needs and contributions to HRM theory.

Finally, HRM researchers and practitioners should consider time and resource constraints that affect audience analysis. With necessary time and resources, trainers have the luxury of conducting complete analyses using questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups (Beebe, 2007). Often, trainers make on-the-spot analyses. Questioning techniques that can be used to help tailor message content by soliciting information about trainee needs, interests, and experiences (e.g., “What would you like to learn?”) assists in on-the-spot audience analysis (Beebe, 2007). Research could study the efficacy of such questioning in training programs.

### ***Training: Methods and Practices***

Although trainers have many delivery methods at their disposal, most prefer to use combinations of techniques (Miller, 2012). In general, methods vary along a continuum of participation—lectures and demonstrations are low on participation; panel discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and behavioral modeling require midlevel participation; and brainstorming, case studies and role-playing necessitate active participation (Laird et al., 2003). Communication research has shown that comprehension of material in educational settings increases through the use of questions by teachers and students (Daly & Vangelisti, 2003). Trainers can facilitate this process by requiring that trainees develop the questions and facilitate discussion. Given that training in corporate settings is different from learning in classroom settings, additional research could explore the outcomes and processes of adult learners' use of questions for training material comprehension and application.

Incorporating questioning techniques allows HRM professionals to get past seeing training as disseminating information. Trainers use discourse to generate meaning as to why changes are needed based upon the various means of engaging users (e.g., training manuals, advanced workshops, including pros and cons of new technologies; Hovde, 2010). Further, Hovde's research demonstrates the importance of understanding the audience's expressed desires for the technical training. Yet the incorporation of said desires into training content has not received sufficient attention in HRM literature. Further research could expand Hovde's study of content generators by exploring user reactions to how discourse creates meaning and with what effect. Other research in technical communication includes strategies for explaining information (e.g., elucidating, quasi-scientific, and transformative; see Rowan, 2003), yet research is needed to test the applicability of these strategies in training-specific contexts. Some research considerations include the following: how training content can be modified to help less experienced users become acclimated to technology, how HRM professionals can best gauge the most effective means to design and deliver information and training, and how various discursive techniques facilitate learning and affect on-the-job performance.

Furthermore, research on technological advances could assess recent trends in training delivery. E-learning is a key cost-cutting method (Saks et al., 2011). However, little is known about the constitution of the training/learning environment in e-learning contexts. Trainers can use an online platform to monitor and track trainees' progress through various training phases. Additionally, techniques such as dialogue and questioning can be leveraged in online formats through e-journals and listservs where trainees reflect on training content. Encouraging participation using asynchronous methods gives learners the opportunity to carefully reflect and apply the material.

Another way to enhance participation is to form accountability groups where trainees team up with fellow organization members to track each others' progress. Teams can even compare their progress to those of other teams, which can lead to social facilitation that is productive for learning. Research could delve into the extent to which online methods such as e-journaling can affect training transfer to the organization and how sensemaking about training aspects (e.g., trainer skills at questioning) might differ in online contexts.

## ***Post-Training: Evaluation and Transfer***

### ***Training Evaluation***

Two issues of utmost importance are evaluation and transfer of training content. Despite the importance of evaluation in terms of return on investment, and despite entreaties over many years to conduct assessments of training effects, trainers typically fail to perform systematic evaluations of what trainees learned and whether such learning affected their job performance (Spitzer, 1999; Wang & Wilcox, 2006). Training evaluation most often relies on reaction measures about the program to make improvements in content—known as formative feedback. Formative feedback—in other words, information that trainers can use to alter training or instructional programs—may be provided to trainees as ways to modify their thinking or behavior and thus enhance their learning (Shute, 2008). For example, trainers teaching strategies for managing conflict at work can observe trainees practicing various techniques and provide specific communicative recommendations for how to reach collaborative solutions. Similarly, trainees can be provided feedback on their incorporation of active listening techniques (e.g., eye contact, paraphrasing).

As these examples might indicate, training evaluation can be especially difficult for human resource development (HRD) personnel. As opposed to the types of investments and monetary assessments that occur in the accounting and financial worlds, training evaluation in HRD is difficult given that many skills and outcomes being measured are intangible (e.g., listening, feedback, mentoring, employee satisfaction) and, therefore, cannot be easily calibrated in terms of dollars and cents (Wang, Dou, & Li, 2002). At a broader level, HRD evaluation is tricky given that learning outcomes interact with organizational and environmental factors (e.g., organizational culture and mission, business market, market circumstances, competition; see Wang, 2000, as cited in Wang et al., 2002).

The evaluation of training often is compromised by the evaluation mind-set of trainers. This mind-set is symptomatic of a preoccupation with fairness (e.g., when judging training outcomes as effective/ineffective or individual abilities as low/high skill) and fears of making discriminatory judgments about training outcomes. For Swanson (2005), a trainer may bypass evaluation for fear of an imperfect discrimination or lack of courage to stand behind an evaluation that discriminates. Failure to provide feedback can be antithetical to trainee progress by limiting trainees' abilities to apply skills from training to work settings. To improve outcomes and provide feedback, training could incorporate supportive communication such as appraisal feedback (e.g., "You're really improving how you complete those reports. Nice job!"; see Cheney, Christensen, Zorn, & Ganesh, 2011). Constructive feedback precisely describes the situational requirements, subsequent behavior, and processes of trainees' skill development. Research linking feedback to training outcomes and formative changes to training programs is warranted.

### *Training Transfer*

"Without transfer, training fails" (Laird et al., 2003, p. 207). Scholars and practitioners have written about the "transfer problem" (e.g., Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Grossman & Salas, 2011; Laird et al., 2003; Talbot, 2011). For training to have an impact on individuals, teams, and organizations, what is learned in training must be applied by trainees in their job settings. Training content must be *generalizable* to the context in which the training takes place, and workers must *maintain* the learning, skills, and attitudes over time (Blume, Ford, Baldwin, & Huang, 2010).

One way that trainers can attempt to ensure training transfer is through the use of the functional context approach (Philippi, 1996). The functional approach begins with a task analysis during which trainers interview and observe workers completing tasks to familiarize themselves with actual job-related scenarios (e.g., relevant steps needed for greeting customers in customer service-related tasks). The task analysis affords the trainer the opportunity to ensure that training materials are connected to actual work processes.

Studies have identified factors that affect the success of transfer (Grossman & Salas, 2011). Many factors are based on Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of trainee characteristics, training design, and work environment. In terms of *trainees*, the greatest predictors of transfer are cognitive ability (i.e., intelligence, understanding complex ideas), self-efficacy (i.e., the belief that one is capable of enacting the desired training), motivation (i.e., persistence in goal setting and attainment), and perceived utility or value of the training being offered (i.e., cost-benefit ratio). The greatest factors in terms of training *design* are behavior modeling (i.e., observing and practicing desired behaviors), error management (i.e., learning about common errors and how to correct/avoid them), and a realistic training environment (i.e., mirroring the environment in which

competencies will be applied). Finally, in terms of work *environment*, factors include the transfer climate (i.e., organizations that facilitate or inhibit transfer—by means of positive reinforcement, organizational culture, feedback, and so on), support (from peers and supervisors), opportunity to perform (i.e., ability to apply what they have learned), and follow-up (e.g., after action reviews). Further research is needed on the various factors that lead to transfer (Blume et al., 2010). Moreover, attention to how communication during training creates an environment more conducive to training transfer is warranted.

For example, aligned with our communication-as-constitutive-of-training approach is an alternative to common transfer assessment, viz., narrative/interpretive approaches. These approaches involve eliciting stories, myths, values, and metaphors, collectively known as organizational culture (Beebe et al., 2013; Meyer, 2002). These communication-centered techniques afford access to the “symbols that make up the day-to-day life world of communicators in organizations [which] is crucial for assessment because they represent the key sensemaking actions of organizational members” (Meyer, 2002, p. 472). Acknowledging that established norms and practices reveal themselves whenever new practices are taught or new routines are being established, various methods could be used to tap into these factors to reveal how they affect training transfer. Research employing systematic methods to study organizational politics that emerge, for example, during performance appraisals (Latham & Dello Russo, 2008) might take a meaning-centered approach. Further, a meaning-centered approach affords insight into interpersonal power dynamics and organizational history, including history with training programs and subcultures (Weick, 2007). These considerations are potentially valuable to the development of training content but are explored rarely in extant training literature in communication or HRM fields.

## Conclusion

We have reviewed key issues, trends, and practices related to training. Our aim was to stimulate interest in avenues for further research so that scholars and practitioners can begin to adopt communication-centered approaches, particularly the communication as constitutive of training. As greater demands are placed on organizations in an increasingly complex and global environment, the study and practice of training must respond to these challenges. We believe that communication-centered approaches are poised to play a central role in ensuring the health and long-term viability of organizations. For this reason, communicative content and competencies (e.g., interpersonal and intercultural) of training warrant further attention (Rothwell, 1996). Furthermore, the mechanisms through which training takes place—in other words, communication—need to be more fully explored (Messersmith et al., 2009).

Indeed, despite recognition that communication competencies play an important role in training, and are often the target of training efforts (e.g., listening, conflict management, public speaking), it remains unclear how communication is conceptualized by HRM practitioners. It appears that a transmission or informational view of communication is the dominant viewpoint. For example, Hovde (2010) argues that the dominant viewpoint in technical communications is that communication transmits information. In apparently simple situations such as training on a new process—for example, uploading grades to a course management site—it appears all that is required is a message about how to upload the information. However, if the user is skeptical of the merits of posting information to a site, then a more complex perspective on communication is needed. Techniques such as questioning and framing then can be used to tap into how users make sense of the changes and training.

Thus, we wish to widen the viewpoint to propose that communication is central to training. Further, whether training is in-house or external, trainers and trainees are constantly in the process of creating and negotiating meaning. We propose that rather than see communication as one of many skills to develop in training, HRM theory and practice could benefit from seeing training *as* communication. What we have provided here are a number of questions and avenues for future research that can explore further how communication is conceptualized by HRM professionals. In the end we hope to encourage conversation about the ways that a CCO perspective might inform HRM theory and practice.

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