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"Indian Corporate Trainer's Choice: Methods for Enhanced Training Engagement and Effectiveness"

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Abstract

Training and Development (T&D) is a vital Organisation Development (OD) intervention. Without T&D, the human resources in an organization will become irrelevant and obsolete. Therefore, it is pertinent for all organizations to keep training their people. A training program is an elaborate process that includes: Training Needs Analysis, Training Planning, Training Preparation, Developing Training Contents, Choosing Training methods, Identifying appropriate resources, and so on. Much emphasis is laid upon developing a training calendar and training content. However, training methods are usually left to the Trainer or the Resource Person to decide and deliver. The objective of the study is to find the most effective and engaging training methods used by corporate trainers. This exploratory study engages expert interviews to collect data about the trainers and training methods adopted by them. These experts are corporate trainers and are members of CHRD Network. The responses of the trainers are then analyzed and presented systematically. The interview schedule consists of questions whose answers help us discover the frequently used training methods of corporate trainers. Finally, this paper deciphers the most effective and engaging training methods used by the trainers across India. It explains the methods and gauges them using Kirkpatrick's level 1 and level 2 of training evaluation.

Introduction

Manpower Services Commissions' Glossary defines training as "a planned process to modify attitude, knowledge, or skill behavior through learning experience to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities. Its purpose, in the work situation, is to develop the abilities of the individual and to satisfy the current and future needs of the organization" (1981: 62). And, development is "growth or realization of a person's ability through conscious or unconscious

learning. Development programs usually include elements of planned study and experience and are frequently supported by a coaching or counseling facility.” (1981: 15)

Edwin B. Flippo calls training the act of increasing the knowledge and skill of an employee for doing a particular job; Micheal J. Jucious defines training as a process to increase the attitudes, skills, and abilities of employees to perform the specific job; William G. Torpey sees training as the process of developing skill, knowledge, habits, and aptitudes in employees to increase the effectiveness in their present position as well as to prepare them for future positions (cited in Santana M).

Thus, training means imparting the knowledge, skills, and aptitudes necessary to undertake the required jobs efficiently to develop the worker to his fullest potential. As an organized activity, training is designed to create a change in the thinking and behavior of people.

Overall, Training and development is the total of all the educational activities that are created and conducted to enhance the knowledge and skills of employees in an organization. These activities provide information and instructions to improve the performance of the employees. Training is also accepted as an important intervention to improve employee motivation and morale. While training is provided to impart specific skills and knowledge for specific tasks at hand, development focuses on the career of the employees in the organization. The following are the features of training (Rishipal, 2011):

- a) Training is a learning process.
- b) Training permanently imparts the skills needed to perform specific tasks.
- c) Training targets behavioral modification.
- d) Training provides expertise to handle jobs.
- e) Training includes teaching, learning, and practice.
- f) Training includes trainers and trainees.
- g) Training bridges the gap between the current level of the employee's KSA and the required level of KSA.
- h) Training develops required competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities) for a job.

Training programs are essential because they are an integral part of management development as well. In fact, in the past, loyal and efficient workers got promoted to supervisory and managerial positions due to their contemporary performance. However, their being efficient as a worker did not guarantee their success as a manager. Therefore, the organizations developed the concept of management development. This ensured continuous development of the manager through training, self-learning, on-the-job assignments, and so on. So, the training activities and developmental process became important.

In our times, training and management development programs have become synonymous with Human Resource Development or HRD. The organizations have a dedicated department and team that cater to the training and management development requirements of the employees. The process is also well defined as it begins with a thorough Training Needs Analysis (TNA) in which every employee is assessed or mapped so that relevant training can be imparted to enhance their skills. Then comes designing a training plan. The training plan consists of the

following:

a) Training Goal: Every organization sets a goal for training its employees. This is related to the overall organizational goal. Organizational requirements help establish training goals.

b) Learning Objectives: The training plan also sets learning objectives for the trainees. There is a need to achieve the set objectives for the trainee. For example, if the basic objective of a leadership training program is to develop team management know-how, then the trainees need to at least learn the fundamentals of team dynamics.

c) Training methods: The training plan ensures appropriate training methods for a training program. For example, a software training program needs practical lessons and policy training may require lecture-cum-discussion method. This may sometimes be left to the trainer to decide and implement.

d) Documentation or evidence of learning: The training plan includes documentation related to the training as the training schedule, trainer's profile, trainee's profile, training materials, learning materials, training feedback, etc...

e) Training Evaluation: The training is initially evaluated by taking the feedback of the participants, and later by assessing the participant's on-the-job performance.

Martin et al. (2014) cite Ittner and Doud (1997) that training is imparting knowledge, abilities, skills, or attitudes (KSAs) to participants and involves a process that is governed by certain strategies. These strategies are the training methods. Ampaipatkul (2004) observes that the methods or activities that a trainer or instructor employs are a medium to convey knowledge, experience, or information to the participants. This facilitates learning which might lead to a change in their working behavior and attitudes. From this, it can be construed that a training method is a set of systematic procedures, activities, or techniques that are designed to impart KSAs to the participants that have a direct impact on their job performance. These methods can be trainer or coach driven, or self-driven. Nevertheless, it is one of the most important elements or components of a training program.

In his book, Training, and development, P.L. Rao considers the use of multiple training methods as necessary to make the training program effective (2009). Again, Bob Pike of Creative Training Techniques International explains the 90/20/8 rule of a training program where the time duration of a session is 90 minutes, the pace changes every 20 minutes, and the involvement of the participants in the delivery of the content is initiated every eighth minute (2009). Nikos Andriotis (2018) in his article in eLearning Industry opines that training methods are vital to the success of a training program. It is critical to choose the appropriate training method to ensure that the training objectives are achieved without fail. The training method is the soul of any training program. The contents if not presented or delivered correctly can render the training program ineffective. Thus, it is important to choose the appropriate training method for training the corporate employees.

Theoretical framework- Training Methods

To study various training methods, scholars have broadly categorized training methods as 1) On the Job and 2) Off-the-Job. All the training methods used for

enhancing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the employees fall under one of these categories. It is represented as follows:

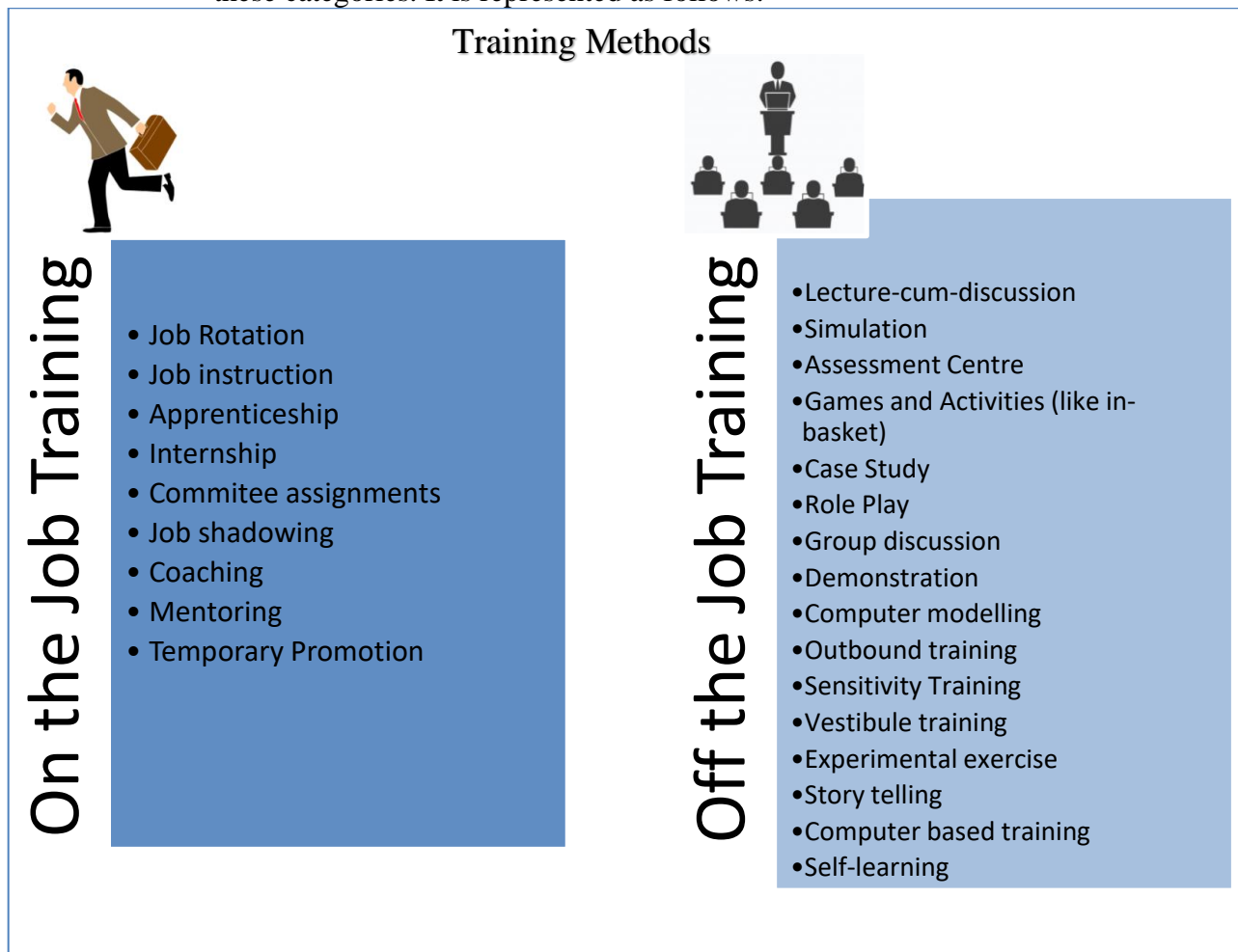


Fig 1: Training Methods

These training methods are devised to train the participants while at the workplace (on the job) or separately in a classroom or a simulated environment.

The Study

The study is based on expert interviews. This qualitative method is widely used for gaining information about a specific field of action. Here, the purpose is to gather the explicit, implicit, and interpretative knowledge of the experts. The study unfurls the popular methods used for training and management development programs in the corporate. The results are showcased as 1) the most engaging methods and 2) the most effective methods. The word ‘Engaging’ training method, connotes Level 1 of Kirkpatrick model of training evaluation; the word ‘Effective’ signifies Level 2. Level 1 is Reaction where the participants find the training favorable, engaging, and relevant. Level 2 is Learning when the participants acquire knowledge, skills, and attitude from the training (Kirkpatrick, 2016). The engaging methods get reflected in the trainer’s feedback. The effective training methods produce favorable scores in the post-test of the training.

The following are the objectives of the study:

- a) To explore the most engaging training methods for corporate training.

b) To explore the most effective training methods for corporate training.

Sampling and the Sample

Expert Trainers (Specialists), identified from the CHRD network, are interviewed to know their opinion. Responses are from sixteen trainers with training experience ranging from 5 years to 30 years.

The process of the study includes:

1. Identifying trainers of repute as experts.
2. Collecting responses using an interview schedule.
3. Assimilating the responses as findings
4. Analyzing the findings
5. Presenting the analysis

The Process:

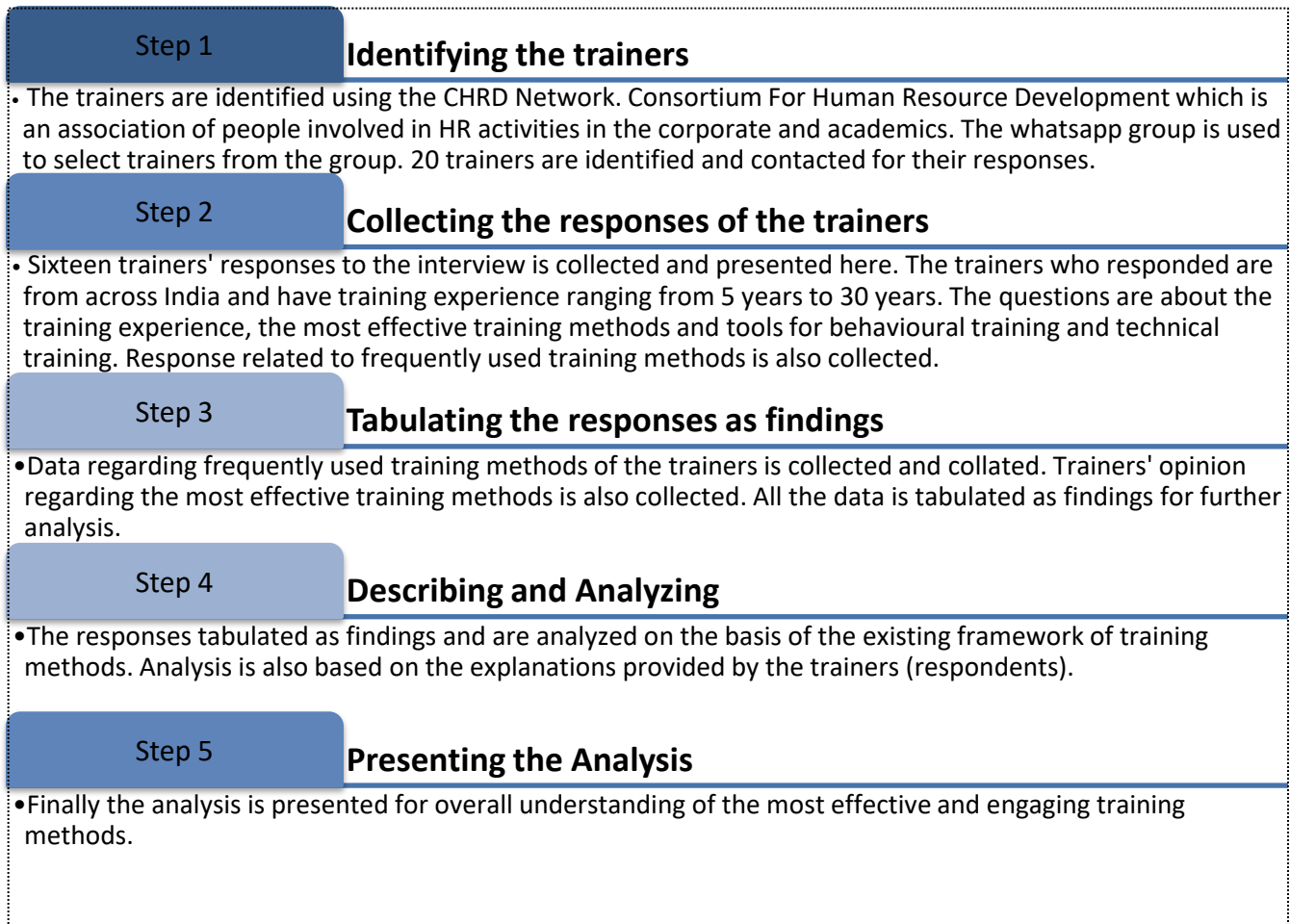


Fig 2: The Process of Study

Findings & Analysis

As discussed earlier, the study adopts an expert interview technique, often used in qualitative research studies. The trainers respond to the questions as per their experience. They freely express their opinions and also supplement reasons. These

responses are presented as findings in this section. The responses include information about their experience, the training topics, the sectors that they cover, the methods and tools that they use for conducting training, the most engaging methods of training, and the most effective methods that enhance the learning of the participants (trainees).

Trainer's Profile

The trainers who responded have a minimum of 5 years of training experience and a maximum of 30 years in training. They all conduct training programs on Management Topics. The topics that the expert trainers cover for behavioral training include:

1. Attitude shaping and personal effectiveness	22. Management Skills
2. Balance sheet analysis	23. Managerial Skills
3. Basic interpersonal skills	24. Managing emotions effectively at workplace
4. Behavioral Competencies & Technical Competency	25. Managing Self and Relations
5. Behavioral Training,	26. Motivation skills
6. Body language and Etiquette	27. Performance appraisal and feedback management
7. Business Environment	28. Personal Development
8. Communication Skills	29. Personal Effectiveness
9. Conflict and Teams	30. Persuasion skills
10. Conflict resolution	31. Presentation skills
11. Credit policy	32. Problem-solving skills
12. Customer Centricity	33. Product Session,
13. Decision-Making Skills	34. Product, Process, Service
14. Delegation of power	35. Sales and Negotiation,
15. Emotional intelligence,	36. Sales Management.
16. Employee satisfaction & customer satisfaction	37. Self-awareness and positive thinking
17. English Grammar	38. Six Thinking Hats and Negotiation skills
18. Happiness and Stress Management	39. Soft Skills
19. Interview skills	40. Stress management through CBT
20. Law of Attraction (Interpersonal relations)	41. Team Building,
21. Leadership Development	42. Time management
	43. Vigilance
	44. Voice intonation and modification
	45. Working capital assessment

Table 1: List of Topics for Behavioural Training

The interview responses reveal that the trainers have 5 to 30 years of experience in behavioral training. Thus, making them experts in their field. The interview responses provide great insight into the training industry of the

country. It is also apparent from the above table that the topics covered by the trainers are prolific as regards behavioral training. Most of the topics are related to managerial skills. These skills are essential for any individual's performance in an organization.

Sectors Covered by the Trainers

They conduct executive (entry-level, middle level, and top-level) training programs in various sectors like:

1.	Aeronautics	16.	Hospitality
2.	Agrichem	17.	IT sector
3.	Automobile	18.	ITES
4.	Aviation	19.	Manufacturing
5.	Banking	20.	Mental health
6.	BFSI	21.	Mining
7.	Consulting	22.	Retail
8.	Consumer Durable	23.	Social Sector -Education,
9.	Corporate Education		Health, Livelihood
10.	E-commerce business	24.	Telecom
11.	Education	25.	Tourism
12.	Education Technology		
13.	Electronics		
14.	Entertainment		
15.	FMCG		

Table 2: The Sectors Receiving Training

The responses of the experts suggest that they cover almost all the corporate sectors. They train the executives of various levels across the organization. Thus, their understanding of the training needs and the trainees' behavior is highly reliable.

Training Methods & Tools frequently used by trainers

1. Audio Visual Aids used with Lecture - Audio-visual aids are the training or educational material that facilitates learning using both the senses of hearing and sight. Movies or films, recordings, photographs, or audio content, etc. are examples of AV aids used for classroom instruction or lecture. Byte Size video content is used for quick explanation and analysis.
2. Case study and situation analysis- A case study is a method that provides descriptive situations that stimulate the participants to make decisions. The purpose of a case study or situation analysis is to make the learners apply their concepts or learnings and develop new ways to manage a situation or solve a problem.
3. Demonstration- A demonstration is a process of training the participants on how to make or do something in a step-by-step manner. The instructor or the trainer tells the process while doing it.
4. Energizers- These are brief activities to increase the energy level of participants by engaging them in a physical task. It usually evokes fun and laughter that boosts the learners' attention level, stimulates creativity, and removes barriers among them. It also helps the trainer familiarize with learners.

5. Experiential activities- It includes role-plays, problem-solving tasks, simulations, on-the-job tasks, case studies, and reflective games.
6. Flipped Classroom- It is a dynamic training concept that engages the learners before the training through pre-training materials, then engages them in activity-based training, and ends with continuing assignments. This method is gaining popularity due to its wide applicability even in the online training platform.
7. Games and Activities- Using relevant management or business games encourages the learners to participate in the learning activities with enthusiasm. The games break the monotony of regular classroom training and simultaneously develop the learners' skills. Serious games improve skills like observation, motivation, overcoming criticism, strategic thinking, team building, etc...
8. Group Discussion-Group discussions are used to let the learners share their experiences or knowledge, create new ideas or action plans, do a need assessment, understand complex issues and then make group decisions.
9. In-basket- In the in-basket exercise, the learner confronts issues and problems that accumulate in the manager's "in-basket". The learners prioritize and solve the issues. This makes them learn the methods to solve complex issues at the workplace.
10. Lecture and Interaction- Lecture is the most commonly used classroom training method. It is an efficient and cost-effective way to train a large number of learners at one time. Lectures with interaction make the training more participative than the lecture.
11. On-the-job practice- Staying at the workplace and understanding the job responsibilities, the knowledge, and skills needed to do that job is on-the-job training. This is usually carried out by trainers who also act as coaches or mentors.
12. Outbound- It is a physical activity-based behavioral training for the development of the learners (employees). It is based on experiential learning methodology and is usually conducted as an outdoor or adventure program.
13. Powerpoint slides & whiteboard- Powerpoint slides and whiteboards are used as a regular aid/ tool for lecture methods or storytelling.
14. Presentations- The learners learn better when they make presentations on what they learn or understand. Feedback from the audience also makes them confident.
15. Psychometric tests- Self-assessment through psychometric tests help the learners to understand their behavior and modify it as per the workplace requirement.
16. Role-playing- Role-playing is one of the most effective methods to learn and gain experience. An individual who assumes a role during the process remembers the feelings so emanated intensely and uses them at the workplace. The role-playing also helps the other non-participating learners to analyze the behavior of people in a given situation. They learn to react to various behavior.
17. Sandbox tool- This term has been borrowed from the world of IT. To do any security research or dive into malware analysis, a sandbox is used to ensure that all resources are unavailable to the virtual machine, Sandbox makes the new or alien process go through the working environment without affecting the original process.

Similarly, the trainers make the learners work on dummy projects or schedules that produce results but do not affect the organizational processes.

18. Simulation- Simulation training creates a life-like learning environment that mirrors the actual work scenario. Trainees use their real knowledge and skills in practice by reading the available literature on theory or listening to lectures and utilizing them through physical, hands-on activity.

19. Storytelling- Stories can teach important lessons and make learning and development, for even professionals, an unforgettable learning experience. Stories help understand and remember important information. Abstract concepts can be easily communicated through stories.

20. Teach-Back- The teach-back method is popularly called the "show-me" method. It is a communication confirmation method. This method is taken from the communication pattern of the healthcare providers. This method helps trainers and learners to reiterate the lessons learned and confirm its use in the workplace.

The expert trainers interviewed for this study use as many as 20 different methods for their training programs. They select these methods after analyzing the audience, the topic, and the venue. The training methods used by the trainers are in sync with the theoretical framework. All off-the-job training methods listed in the theoretical framework are used by the trainers. **Methods like sandbox tools and the teach-back method are novel and not listed in the theoretical framework.**

Sandbox Tool is a combination of the on-the-job 'Assignment method' and off-the-job 'Simulation method'. The trainer gives the learners an assignment at the workplace. However, the results of the assignment do not affect any of the existing processes. Yet like simulation, the individual results of the assignments are derived and discussed for learning and improvement.

Another method is the Teach-Back method. This method is mentioned as a level 2 evaluation method in Kirkpatrick's Four-Level of Training Evaluation (2016). But here, the trainer uses this as a training method. In this method, the trainer asks the learners to communicate a work plan based on the concepts learned during the training. Later, the learner provides feedback on the applicability and the effectiveness of the work plan at the workplace. This helps the learner to experience the concepts at the workplace and make modifications when required. These two methods are novel and need to be studied in detail. These methods should also find a place in the existing scheme of training methods.

The Most Effective Behavioural Training Methods

When asked about the training methods that they find most effective keeping in view level 2 of Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model, the trainers listed out those methods that enhance learning among the trainees. The learning is measured through a post-test. The post-test scores indicate learning effectiveness. Thus on this parameter, the trainers find certain training methods more effective than others while conducting behavioral training programs. The responses of the trainers are sorted and presented in the table below. The frequency refers to the number of experts who use the method frequently to produce the desired results.

The following are the **most effective behavioral training methods:**

Sl. No.	Most Effective Behavioural Training Methods	Terms Used	Frequency (No. of experts)
1.	Case study and situation analysis	Case studies, Cases, Case discussion	9
2.	Roleplay	Job Shadowing, Role-Modeling	8
3.	Game-based method	Games, Business games, gamification, Management games	8
4.	Classroom Interaction	Interaction and on the job practice examples, Classroom session with experience sharing, Whiteboard	6
5.	Group and Individual Presentations		3
6.	Audio-Visual Aids	Byte Size video, Video case studies, movie examples	5
7.	Psychometric tests	psychometric tools	4
8.	In-basket		3
9.	Simulation		4
10.	Speaking and Writing Activities	Worksheets	3
11.	Computer-based training	VILT, e-learning	4

Table 3: Most Effective Training Methods

The above table lists the training methods that the trainers find most effective. As for the trainers, in their experience, these methods help the trainees learn better. Learning in Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model is the measure of the information that is absorbed by the trainees during the training. This is usually measured with the help of a test immediately after the training.

In this study, the Case Study method is the most effective as mentioned by nine trainers out of the sixteen interviewed. The next most effective methods are the Role Play method and Games based method, followed by the classroom interaction (lecture-cum-discussion) method. Based on the responses the following ranking table is presented below:

Rank	Most Effective Behavioural Training Methods	Frequency (No. of experts)
1	Case study and situation analysis	9
2	Roleplay	8
2	Game-based method	8
3	Classroom Interaction	6
4	Audio-Visual Aids	5

5	Psychometric tests	4
5	Simulation	4
5	Computer-based training	4
6	Group and Individual Presentations	3
6	In-basket	3
6	Speaking and Writing Activities	3

Table 4: Ranking the most effective methods

The most Engaging Training Methods

The trainers find that certain training methods engage the trainees more than the others. Training methods that they find most engaging are the methods that draw

Sl. No.	Most Engaging Training Methods	Frequency Distribution	Top 5 Training Methods
1.	Games and Activities	12	Rank 1
2.	Role Plays	12	Rank 1
3.	Movie Videos or Audio-Visuals with lecture	11	Rank 2
4.	Case Studies	10	Rank 3
5.	PowerPoint Slides	10	Rank 3
6.	Demonstrations	9	Rank 4
7.	Small group discussions	8	Rank 5
8.	Story Telling	7	Rank 5
9.	Whiteboard or blackboard with lecture	5	Rank 6
10.	Individual Presentation	4	Rank 7
11.	In basket & Simulation	1	Rank 8

positive reactions from the participants. This is comparable to level 1 of Kirkpatrick's model of training evaluation. The focus of this level is on engagement, relevance, and satisfaction. Thus on this parameter, the trainers find certain training methods more effective than others while conducting behavioral training programs. The responses of the trainers are sorted and presented in the table below. The frequency refers to the number of experts who use the method frequently to produce the desired results.

Table 5: Most Engaging Training Methods

The trainers find games, activities, and role-plays the most engaging training methods. The reasons for these methods to be most engaging are that these methods break the monotony, increase participation and interaction. These methods facilitate experiential learning, learning from the peers and the trainer in one go. However, the trainers sign a word of caution that these methods may fail to achieve the program objectives if they have no relation with the contents or if the debriefing is not appropriate.

The interview analysis provides an overview of the training methods that are used by the trainers in India. It also deciphers the most effective and the most engaging methods of training as perceived by the trainers. The top 5 methods with a

consolidated view of the findings 4 and 5 can be presented as follows:

Method	Effectiveness Rank	Engagement Rank	Consolidated Rank (based on the mean values of frequencies)
Case study and situation analysis	1	3	2
Roleplay	2	1	1
Game-based method	2	1	1
Classroom interaction	3	2	3
AV aids with lecture	4	2	4

Table 6: A Consolidated Ranking of the Most Effective and Engaging Training Methods

Thus, the most effective behavioral training methods that help a trainer achieve the training objectives (level 1 and level 2 of Kirkpatrick's model of training evaluation) are Role Play, Games and Activities, Case Studies, Classroom interaction with AV aids.

Conclusions

Although the study is exploratory, yet it provides certain crucial insights about training methods. It is helpful for budding trainers to consider these methods while planning their training presentations. It is also helpful for academia to probe deeply into the reasons that make certain training methods more effective than others, and suggest ways to make every method equally effective. An excellent content poorly delivered can make a training program ineffective and wasteful. Thus, the study gives the immense possibility to improve the quality of delivery in a training program; it identifies the need to evaluate training methods separately to test their effectiveness.

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The author declares no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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