

Review of Evaluating the ROI from learning: How to develop value based training

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Innovation: 3 stars

Content – 5 stars

Clarity – 4 stars

Recommendation – 4 stars

Value for money 4 stars

Paul Kearns is a well known writer on the subject of evaluation and now I understand why. I admit I'd been putting my head in the sand about reading up on evaluation – I knew it was important, and that I did elements of it but the thought of all that paperwork put me off. So thank you Paul Kearns for making it so much simpler.

The book is well written and clearly sets out at the beginning what is to come.

The first section explains the context and theory of evaluation and how it connects learning with business objectives. It takes Kirkpatrick as the best known model and then expands on it with a great big baseline: if we don't know how we want to add value before any training then there is little point even starting.

The theory is clear and passionate – Paul Kearns really believes in the importance of learning and how it needs to be tied into business objectives. He gets away from the question of how can we 'prove' that learning is important to the business "Trainers who act as business partners just aim to keep training closely tied to business objectives, not to prove their case in a court of law." It comes down to the probability of a particular learning intervention adding value.

Part two is about practicalities including how to measure ROI and useful stories about how it has been done. There are a range of tools and techniques for evaluation including the simple, yet powerful, 3 Box system. The section on applying evaluation to various types of learning intervention was particularly interesting especially the part about aligning soft skills with hard business measures.

There is a very comprehensive appendix that included my favourite bit "The top 20 most common questions about evaluation and ROI" with some really helpful answers – absorbing and learning them could make life easier for lots of us. There is also a useful critique of other evaluation models and their pluses and minuses.

This is a very pragmatic book to be kept on hand and referred to regularly.