

# THE SMART APPLICANT'S SURVIVAL GUIDE TO THE 2021 TRAINING TOP 125

Useful resources, common sense advice and a few surprises about the learning industry's longest award application.

SPOT-ON BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS  
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*Winning Recognition for Learning Leaders*



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Training magazine or the Training Top 125 Award.*

## II. Training Top 125: An Overview

Over the years, *Training* magazine has increasingly required *evidence* of how the learning function supports corporate strategy and goals. The magazine has also made the application more challenging and comprehensive. Thankfully, they're also transparent about scoring guidelines, so if you've got the right stuff, AND you adhere to these guidelines, your score and rank will reflect it.

### A chance to benchmark

Measuring impact can be a challenge. The companies that rank high on this award meet that challenge. It's my belief that applying for this award (and others) challenges you to aim higher, raise your standards, adjust your metrics, capture new data and expand your reach. Your ranking on this list, if disappointing, may guide you on where you need to adjust and focus.

### Why I wrote this Guide for you

To do well on this award, you can't just *be* great. You must *prove* that you're great. I have seen many training professionals who are outstanding at what they do but who lack the time, resources and/or understanding of what's required to develop an outstanding submission. They do superlative work, but they are not getting credit for it because their award applications don't reflect their true impact.

I hope that this Guide will help you show your learning organization in the best possible light. You deserve to be recognized for your hard work and accomplishments. And with everything else you have on your plate you deserve some guidance that will save you time and stress.

### The bottom line

The Training Top 125 judges want to know that training matters at your company and that you are having a positive impact on your organization—not just that you have successful programs, but that the learning function is systematically improving performance, driving results and supporting corporate strategic goals. Always bear this in mind, both in this application and as you strive to make a difference.

### *Training* magazine resources

These resources from *Training* provide additional insights.

- **Information:** General info, documents and FAQs are available [from the Training Web site](#).
- **Two Webinars** are available to you:

## VI. 5 Key Steps to Never Overlook

These critical steps should be first on your to-do list. While they may seem obvious, I have seen otherwise savvy clients skip these steps and pay the price later.

### 1. Create a schedule with clear milestones.

This application is massive. Do everything in your power to stay organized. Figure out how many people need to review the application, how much time they will need, etc. You may need to ask an admin to block out review time(s) on a decision maker's calendar several weeks in advance.

### 2. Review last year's feedback report and qualitative scoresheet (emailed to you after the gala).

Carefully read this gold mine of information about your previous application's strengths and weaknesses. Your scores will help you understand where you should focus your efforts this year. If you're a first-time applicant, pay extra attention to the scoring guidelines.

### 3. Identify your strengths.

Identify your strongest programs and successes—in terms of innovation, metrics, links to key corporate objectives, trendy initiatives like gamification, etc.—and turn them into a checklist. *Enlist your team to help you do this* so you can tap into the group's collective knowledge and truly capture all your strengths. Then you can determine the best places in the application to leverage them.

Also, take a step back and look at the big picture. In what areas have you made the greatest impact in the past year? How are you influencing employee engagement and culture? What inroads have you made with internal clients and/or senior leadership? If you had to list the key reasons your learning organization is awesome (without mentioning a single individual program), what would they be? Draw up this list and use it early and often.

### 4. Line up your Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) early.

Your colleagues are both busy and human. It may be very easy for them, especially those in other departments, to put your e-mail request on their back burner. Give people ample time to respond to you, and be prepared that their response may be, “Go ask So-and-So.”

## **VIII.a. QUANTITATIVE SCORING GUIDELINES**

### **2.2 Formal Programs (10 points)**

- .10 for each program when selected as Seldom
- .25 for each Often
- .5 for each Always
- 0 for Never

**2.3 Hours (2 points).** Based on the “average” hours trained (the sum of all the hours in section 2.3 divided by the 9 categories), a score is assigned as:

- 0 for less than 20 hours
- 1 point for 20-40 hours
- 2 points for more than 40 hours

**2.4 Ratio of Trainers to Employees (2 points).** Based on the ratio of employees to trainers (total employees {2.14a+b} to total FT + PT trainers {2.4}), a score is assigned as:

- 0 for more than 150 employees per trainer
- 1 for between 101 and 150 employees per trainer
- 2 for fewer than 100 employees per trainer

### **2.6 Training Budget as Percent of Payroll (3 points)**

- 0 for less than 1%
- 1 for 1% to 3%
- 2 for 3.1% to 7%
- 3 for more than 7%

### **2.62a Cost Savings (2 points)**

- 0 for less than 0.0001%
- .5 for 0.0001 to 0.49%
- 1 for 0.5 to 1%
- 1.5 for 1.1 to 3%
- 2 for greater than 3%

### **2.63 L&D Investment Decisions (2 points)**

- 0 for Seldom, Never or N/A
- .20 for Often
- .40 for Always

### **2.8 Tuition Participation (2 points)**

- 0 for less than 0% or missing
- .5 for less than 10%
- 1 for less than 11-20%
- 2 for 20% or more

### **2.9 Maximum Tuition (2 points)**

- 2 points for no maximum
- 1.5 points for more than \$5,250
- 1 point for \$2,000 to \$5,250
- .5 point for less than \$2,000
- 0 point for less than \$1,000

### Outstanding New Training Initiative (5 points)

Highlight project scope, use of training to achieve a specific, measurable, numerical (quantifiable) business or business unit strategic goal, innovation, reinforcement, senior leadership involvement, and demonstrable numerical (quantifiable) Level 3 (behavior change) or Level 4 (business impact) results that tie back to the specific, measurable corporate strategic goal\*. ~~Applicant should demonstrate innovation, potential to evolve into a companywide best practice, achieved targeted goal, at least preliminary results.~~

Scoring is as follows:

- **Project scope (1 point):** 1 point for several business units/departments; and .5 is awarded for a single business unit/department.
- **Business/business unit Corporate goal (1 point):** .5 point for listing the **business or business unit** corporate goal and .5 point for the goal being specific, measurable, **and numerical (quantifiable)** (the goal can be one noted in Section 2.1 OR a different corporate goal).
- **Innovation (1 point):** .25 to 1 point for innovation from an overall training perspective OR for innovation in terms of training done in the applicant's industry.
- **Reinforcement (.5 point):** .25 point is awarded for description of reinforcement methods provided and .25 point for longer-term reinforcement (planned for more than 3 months after the training).
- **Senior leadership involvement (.5 point):** .25 point if senior leaders (either C-suite or business unit executives) are involved in the design, development, or marketing of the program and .25 point if senior leaders (either C-suite or business unit executives) are involved in the facilitation of it (title should be provided in both cases).
- **Level 3 (behavior change) AND 4 (business impact) results (1 point):** 1 point for specific, numerical **(quantifiable)** Level 3 results AND/OR specific, numerical **(quantifiable)** Level 4 results as defined above **(in either case, results must tie back to the original measurable business or business unit corporate goal).**

*\*Seems this should have been changed to "business or business unit goal" as in the rest of the application.*

### Section 2.62b: Training Efficiency Example (2 points)

#### Project Scope (1 point):

- .5 point for listing the number of learners affected
- .5 for detailing the portions of the company that reaped the benefit of the efficiency (entire company, multiple business units/ functions/ departments, single business unit/function /department)

#### Business Impact (1 point):

- 1 for detailing the specific business impact (i.e., \$XX saved in travel costs; XX hours saved; X% increase in productivity; XX additional employees trained).

### Section 2.64: Governance Model and Business Alignment (4 points)

- .25 for describing the L&D/Training reporting structure (including number of L&D/Training people involved)
- .25 for describing the L&D governance model
- .5 for giving an example of how the governance model works successfully
- .5 for a member of the L&D/Training team (PROVIDE TITLE) being a member of the senior executive team. (Note: This could be the CHRO if L&D reports to that function)
- .5 for at least one L&D member (PROVIDE TITLE OR TITLES) meeting regularly with *the senior executive team* (PROVIDE EXEC TITLES AND MEETING FREQUENCY—i.e., weekly, monthly, quarterly)
- .5 for at least one L&D member (PROVIDE TITLE/S) meeting regularly with *business unit leaders* (PROVIDE EXEC TITLE AND MEETING FREQUENCY—i.e., daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly)
- .5 for at least one L&D member (PROVIDE TITLE/S) participating in the organization's setting of annual corporate strategic goals