

THE SMART APPLICANT'S SURVIVAL GUIDE TO THE 2020 TRAINING TOP 125

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

SPOT-ON BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS
DEB ARNOLD, ink.
Winning Recognition for Learning Leaders



CONTENTS

Click on an entry below to jump to that section. Click to Return to Contents at the end of each section.

I. [How to Use This Guide](#)

II. [Training Top 125: An Overview](#)

III. [What's New This Year \(Major Stuff!\)](#) **(IMPORTANT NEW INFO)**

IV. [Be Active, Be the Hero](#)

V. [The 9 Biggest T125 Myths](#)

VI. [5 Key Steps to Never Overlook](#)

VII. [Scoring Guidelines](#) **(IMPORTANT NEW INFO)**

VII.a. [Qualitative Scoring Guidelines](#) **(IMPORTANT NEW INFO)**

VII.b. [Quantitative Scoring Guidelines](#) **(IMPORTANT NEW INFO)**

[About the Author](#)

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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, your score and rank will reflect that.

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, the learning leader, 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 on your application that you're great. I developed this Guide because 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 submissions 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.

Return to [Contents](#)

VI. 5 Key Steps to Never Overlook

These are critical steps you should not miss, and they 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 (emailed to you after the gala).

Read carefully 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.

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.”

VII.b. 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”

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

2.7 Tuition Reimbursement Program (0 point) (-1)

0 point if YES, 0 points if NO

2.8 Tuition Participation (2 points)

- 0 for less than 0% or missing
- .5 for less than 10% ~~15%~~
- 1 for less than 11-20% ~~25%~~
- 2 for 20% ~~25%~~ or more

2.9 Maximum Tuition (2 points)

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