

Measuring Business Impact: Alternative Approaches

“Business impact” refers to the results likely to occur because of a training program, benefits program or change in policy. Results can range from qualitative differences in the attitude of workers to measurable improvements in quality and productivity that can be translated into monetary impact and calculation of a “return on investment” (ROI). ROI studies are not feasible in every situation, but there are other ways to capture the impact of workforce interventions, varying in difficulty, cost and strength of results. The table below offer some suggested approaches.

Approach	Difficulty	Cost	Strength of Results	Pro’s & Cons
Individual worker stories (interviews) - reaction/learning/application of skills - advancement/new opportunities	*	*	*	+ Easy to gather - Only based on 1/few individuals; low rigor
Manager/supervisory reported changes (surveys & interviews) - how people are working differently; impact on team/department/organization/	*	*	*	+ Easy to gather - Subjective responses; low rigor
Client satisfaction surveys (surveys & interviews) - how the client experience has changed	**	**	**	+ Can be an important perspective - Subjective responses; changes may be due to multiple factors, not well linked to training
Measurement of changes in skills/knowledge/behavior - individual assessments	**	**	**	+ provides more objective view on changes - may not fully capture application/impact of changes
Business impact metrics - simple pre-post comparison - comparison to organization average - comparison to industry average	**	**	**	+ uses in-house/available data - doesn’t isolate effects of the intervention (What else might have influenced observed changes?)
Business impact metrics - comparison group (without statistical controls)	***	***	***	+ provides a comparison to similar workers - doesn’t isolate effects of the intervention
Business impact metrics - comparison group (with statistical controls)	****	****	****	+ provides a comparison + isolates effects of the intervention - requires statistical expertise -more expensive
Return on investment study (ROI) - comparing monetized benefits and costs	*****	*****	*****	+ rigorous, defensible findings - Expensive and a lot of effort; not easy to translate everything into dollars