

Measuring Performance Improvement at 3M

When 3M acquired KCI, the companies' combined sales teams needed a consistent leadership foundation to ensure future success. "Having our leaders use the same leadership skills in a consistent manner was integral to managing our business effectively," says Howard Schrold, senior manager, professional development at 3M Health Care, Medical Solutions Division. "By providing a common leadership language and skills to our sales leaders, we leveled the playing field. People understood expectations and were able to hold more effective conversations, which improved performance."

Schrold was already familiar with SLII® from The Ken Blanchard Companies® and knew it would serve their needs well. SLII® is a learning experience that teaches leaders how to set goals, provide the right amount of support and direction to each team member as they navigate certain tasks, and give feedback effectively. It focuses on helping leaders have productive conversations using a common language that empowers direct reports to achieve their goals.

Some leaders had received SLII® training previously and another 50 needed to be trained in the concepts. "I was able to offer refresher courses for the people who had been trained before, while putting the rest of the team through the entire class. We used Blanchard facilitators to deliver all the classes virtually," says Schrold.

Even though Schrold knew how effective SLII® was, he was looking for more data. "I've been using SLII® for 20 years and no matter the industry or company size, this leadership model works," says Schrold. "Coaching methods and sales training methods change, but SLII® works in every situation where you need people to have good influencing and communication skills. I thought it would be helpful to have data to show just how this leadership skills training could improve overall performance."

3M and Blanchard® partnered with Dr. Paul Leone of MeasureUp Consulting* to determine the results of the SLII® training. They used a combination of one-on-one interviews and post-training surveys that measured self-reported data from participants along with corroborating data from their direct reports. Although Dr. Leone's method includes a 6-level measurement strategy, Schrold and his team focused on levels 3 and 4 of measurement to determine if the new skills learned in the training were used back on the job and if the new behaviors made them more productive.

Measurement Results of the Participants

The success case method was used to collect data in one-on-one interviews to assess the impact of the training. Participants were asked to share stories of what helped or hindered learning, behavior change, and business impact. Results included:

- 86% of participants said they were able to acquire new and valuable skills or knowledge
- 91% reported they were able to apply on the job what they learned during SLII® training
- 84% reported some, exceptional, or significant improvement on key leadership skills
- 79% reported improvement on the frequency and effectiveness of one-on-one conversations

Participants were also asked whether they were able to improve specific skills. The results below show the percentages that rated some, exceptional, or significant improvement.

- 80% saw improvement in goal setting skills
- 89% saw improvement in diagnosing skills
- 86% saw improvement in matching skills

84% saw improvement in demonstrating directive leadership skills

80% saw improvement in demonstrating supportive leadership skills

70% saw improvement in the frequency of conducting one-on-one conversations

86% saw improvement in the effectiveness of one-on-one and/or coaching conversations

Participants were asked if these improvements had a positive impact on their relationship with team members and the team's performance. Some 86% reported that the improvement in their skills positively impacted the relationship with their team, while 69% felt that applying the leader behaviors improved their team's performance. When asked to consider all the factors that could have improved their team's performance, participants attributed 19% solely to applying what they had learned in the SLII® training.

Additionally, 71% of participants indicated they are more engaged in their own role since taking the training and 61% are committed to staying with the company as a result of the development opportunity.

Direct Report Data and Overall Performance Improvement

People reporting to the leaders who went through SLII® were surveyed to see if they observed their leader using new skills, and 86% said some or a great deal. They recognized some, exceptional, or significant improvement in the following specific behaviors:

- 94% saw improvement in setting clear action plans
- 82% saw improvement in assessing motivation and skill level to reach goals
- 81% saw improvement in adapting leadership style to meet individual needs

- 71% saw improvement in making sure performance expectations are clear
- 83% saw improvement in actively listening to understand unique needs
- 81% saw improvement in proactively providing actionable feedback
- 86% saw improvement in praising and recognizing a job well done
- 84% saw improvement in holding more frequent one-on-one conversations
- 82% saw improvement in holding more effective one-on-one conversations

Overall, 76% of direct reports indicated that their leader's improved behaviors helped them improve their own performance. Realizing that many factors lead to performance improvement, both leaders and direct reports were asked how much of the performance improvement mentioned above could be attributed to the improved leader behaviors. Direct reports indicated a 41% average overall improvement due to the improved leader skills, while leaders indicated a 19% average.

Conservative numbers were used to determine an average improvement in performance per participant that can be directly attributed to training. The 41% average overall improvement in direct report performance, when multiplied by the 86% average number of direct reports who observed improvement in their leader's behaviors, and then multiplied by 76% average number of direct reports who indicated their leader's improved behaviors increased their own performance, revealed an overall 27% improvement in performance per participant (see image).

LEVEL 4: Isolated performance Improvement



$$41\% \times 86\% \times 76\% = 27\%$$

Average overall
performance
improvement
(as estimated by
direct reports)

Average number of
direct reports who
observed 'some' or 'a
great deal' in leader
improvements

Average number of
direct reports who
say their leader's
improvements
increased their own
performance

Average estimate of
improvement in
performance PER
PARTICIPANT directly
attributable to training



In addition to this overall improvement, 70% of direct reports indicated they are more engaged and motivated as a result of the improved behaviors of their leader and 67% are committed to staying with the company. They also saw improvement in these specific areas:

- 80% saw improvement in communication with their leader
- 78% saw improvement in taking initiative with work activities
- 77% saw improvement in analysis and problem-solving skills
- 75% saw improvement in adaptability and efficiency with workload
- 79% saw improvement in teamwork within the group

Advice to Colleagues

Salespeople, by the nature of their role, receive a large amount of training. With training on sales techniques and product features and benefits already in progress, it might seem overwhelming to add leadership training to the development journey, but Schrold highly encourages it.

“I can’t overestimate the importance of making sure your leaders are using a consistent leadership model. That is especially true with sales leaders. The selling process depends on the ability to have effective conversations, and that is exactly what SLII® delivers,” says Schrold. “Now that people have the SLII® language, they will use it in other training situations, too. For example, using the development level of D2 gives them a safe language to ask for more help when receiving product or sales training. Sometimes it’s hard to get salespeople engaged in training, but if you encourage them to try it, they will see how it helps them not only with their own teams, but also with customers.

“You must remember that leadership training is an investment in your people and in the success of your organization. Now I have the data to prove the value of that investment. In addition to the hard numbers, I admit the verbal feedback from the leaders and their teams was just as important to me. The sales leaders and their direct reports could see the positive difference this made in their communication skills. They were having more productive conversations, building trust, and performing at a higher level. That’s a huge payoff,” concludes Schrold.

**Dr. Paul Leone created the sixth level of measurement, which won the 2019 Brandon Hall Gold Award for best advance in measuring the impact of leadership training. Level 6 is described in his book Measuring and Maximizing Training Impact.*

APPENDIX

Quotes from Participants

1. "SLII® reminded me that what works varies based on [people's] personalities. I now flex my style based on what they need, giving them more or less direction and/or support."
2. "The SLII® training helped me take a step back and look at my people better. I am now listening better and I am now more patient before I give them guidance."
3. "I am giving [people] constructive feedback in a way that doesn't make them feel bad but makes them better." And "My direct reports are more aware after receiving feedback, fixing actual behaviors, and showing up more prepared for the next sales interaction."
4. "SLII® was a great reminder to slow down, to assess the person in the situation. Some are almost always amazing, but everyone needs coaching in something and support in something."
5. "My employees like the new way I lead because it is creating momentum."
6. "SLII® is making my employees happier [...] regardless of if I am giving them direction or support."
7. "I came into an intact working team where there was low morale and engagement. People were down in the dumps. SLII® training came right as I took over team. It gave me a great reminder to find out what each person needs on each task."

8. "I am seeing increased morale, increased engagement, and my team's motivation increased. When they are enthusiastic, they have more fun and see better results. I am seeing their performance improve, they are now tracking their own progress, and they have started counting the small wins every single week."
9. "Since the SLII® training, the team's communication improved in general."
10. "My direct reports are more aware after receiving feedback, fixing actual behaviors, and showing up more prepared for the next sales interaction."
11. "I am giving them constructive feedback in a way that doesn't make them feel bad but makes them better." [NOTE: DUPLICATE OF #3.]
12. "This training pushed me to talk with the Education Department. We need better training on our products/competitor's products to help our people go from D1 to D3."
13. "I am having more efficient conversations with people. Rather than drawing something out (lost time) SLII® provides a better roadmap [...] a shorter road to understand what the person needs so I can provide it—less time and more efficient."
14. "SLII® helped with one of my new hires [...] she got up to speed better/quicker because were very focused on her needs."
15. "My one-on-ones with my direct reports have improved; they are coming to [the meetings] more prepared, increasing efficiency and effectiveness."
16. "I have increased the frequency of coaching. When we get so busy and we know the answer, I have a tendency to tell versus asking, listening, and coaching."

17. "I am preparing and planning more for my one-on-one meetings with my team, and they are more focused and effective now."