

Title: The Loblaw Academy Case Study: Measuring e-Learning success of a Training Program

Authors: *Zanabria, R.^{1,2}, Lachowsky, W.^{1,2}, Hill, A².

¹ Canadian Research Institute for Food Safety (CRIFS)

² University of Guelph, Department of Food Science

E-mail Corresponding author: rzanabri@uoguelph.ca

Keywords:

Food safety, e-learning, training assessment, Kirkpatrick model

Preference:

Oral presentation

Abstract:

Addressing growing public concerns with food safety and quality requires a good base knowledge of food safety practices which can be applied throughout the food supply chain. In 2012, Loblaw Companies Ltd. partnered with the Department of Food Science to use a new innovative approach and develop and deliver a comprehensive on-line food safety training program for their vendors. Eight critical food safety areas were identified and an on-line interactive e-learning format was designed. To effectively assess the participants' commitment, comprehension, and implementation of food safety practices, three assessment tools are used: (i) quizzes, to assess the participants' comprehension of the course material; (ii) assignments, to promote an in depth-analysis of each topic and assess the applicability of the gained knowledge and skills to their facility/processes; and (iii) interactive discussions, where participants learn from one and other, share materials, network and engage in food safety related discussions.

Up to date, over 300 successful participants have completed the training program. To measure how effectively the training program and approach accomplished its stated goals, the Kirkpatrick Model is used. Initial assessment (Level 1 and 2) was carried out through the completion of an online-survey and participants' feedback. Results show that 90% of participants rated their food safety knowledge and skills after completion of the program as 'Excellent' or 'Good', 65% would recommend the program to their co-workers, and 70% were looking forward to more food safety training modules. Also, resources and materials used throughout the Academy were considered relevant, comprehensive, easy to understand and follow, and well organized (> 85%).

Improvements in food safety practices were mainly referred to as behavioral changes in their work sites, including sharing and transfer of information to their co-workers and management teams (e.g., by means of internal presentations/training), improvements / updates to their company's written food safety policies and procedures, and management commitment to new training modules (Level 3).

Further training sessions (+100 participants) started on September 2014, and 3 additional training modules for previous graduate Loblaw Academy alumni run through January – December 2014. Also, following the successful delivery of this program, a new training initiative started on September 2014, named the *Guelph Food Academy*. These new offerings set the next phase for data collection to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning outcomes according to the proposed model. Further approaches may include the use of observational surveys and more-in depth analysis of the business benefits associated with the programs.