

Session: **New trends in management and marketing I.**

Abstract nr: **EASM-0098**

**Human resource training and national sport organization managers: Examining the impact of training on individual and organizational performance**

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*Background and Objectives:*

Training is an important strategic human resource management (HRM) practice (Taylor, Doherty, & McGraw, 2008). HRM literature indicates various performance benefits result from developing a knowledgeable and skilled workforce (Noe, 1998). Within sport, a tremendous amount of time and effort is committed to athlete and coach training in order to optimize 'on-the-field' performance. However, Stuart (2009) argues that, in comparison, 'off-the-field' performance receives far less attention. The neglect of sport administrator training is a significant concern because it suggests the development of organizational leaders is a low priority within the amateur sport system. Canadian athletes and coaches are supported by a comprehensive and highly bureaucratic sport apparatus (Kikulis & Slack, 1995). Despite this expansion, it is still important to examine whether managerial competencies of leaders within the sport system sufficiently meet the current needs of athletes and coaches at all competitive levels, and whether training sport administrators will improve 'off-the-field' performance. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which training influences the individual performance of Canadian national sport organization (NSO) managers, and the organizational performance of Canadian national sport governing bodies.

*Analytical Model:*

Drawing upon the HR training and performance literature an analytical model was developed. The model relates HR training to three key outcome factors - learning, individual performance and organizational performance - and incorporates three mediating factors - motivation to transfer, training design, and organizational climate. According to Kirkpatrick (1959), a change in job performance will only result from training if trainees acquire new knowledge and skills. However, Yamnill and McLean (2001) argue that the value of HR training practices is most evident when learning is transferred to performance. While learning and performance are key training outcomes, Lim and Morris (2006) also argue that training evaluation must include three intervening factors that mediate the transfer of training to individual and organizational performance. The mediating factors relate to three categories - motivation to transfer, training design, and organizational climate - and refer to a range of cognitive and psychomotor constructs, design and training content, and support and opportunity to apply training material, respectively (Holton, Bates, & Ruona, 2000; Russ-Eft, 2002).

### *Methodology and Results:*

A quasi-experimental quantitative methodology was utilized for this study. A training program, called the Risk Management Workshop (RMW), was administered to leaders within Canadian NSOs. The participants in each training program were NSO senior staff such as the Chief Executive Officer and the Manager of High Performance Programs, and executive volunteers such as the President of the Board of Directors. Each RMW was delivered to a specific NSO and therefore incorporated content related to general risk management practices as well as specific challenges unique to the given sport. Workshop attendees (seven for each NSO) completed the same HR Training and Performance Survey at three time series: prior to the RMW, immediately following the RMW, and three months after the RMW. The survey included seven demographic items and 59 5-point likert scale items to measure learning, individual and organizational performance, motivation to transfer, training design, and organizational climate. In addition, four open-ended items related to learning and performance were included. The sample included 70 NSO managers (n=70) from 10 of the 56 NSOs within the Canadian sport system. The preliminary results support current literature regarding the training-performance relationship. Data indicate learning increased following the training program. In addition, both individual and organizational performance increased following the training program. The mediating factors, motivation to transfer, training design, and organizational climate significantly influenced the relationship between learning and performance.

### *Discussion:*

The preliminary findings from this study demonstrate that the RMW training had a direct effect on individual performance and organizational performance, which supports the implementation of professional development strategies to build the capacity of NSO Managers and meet the needs of the demanding Canadian sport system. While the HRM literature offers a strong basis upon which to generate an awareness of the training-performance topic, this research extends our understanding of training transfer-performance practices specifically within the sport context. By focusing upon sport administrator training and performance, the study supports Canadian sport stakeholders who argue the sport system must provide a cycle of continual professional development (SIRC, 2009; Sport and Law, 2009) that enables sport leaders to effectively manage the prevailing challenges within Canada's high performance sport apparatus (Stuart, 2009; CSC, 2009).