



# Engineering the Transfer

Turning Workplace Training into Organizational Capability  
Through Social Support and Knowledge Networks

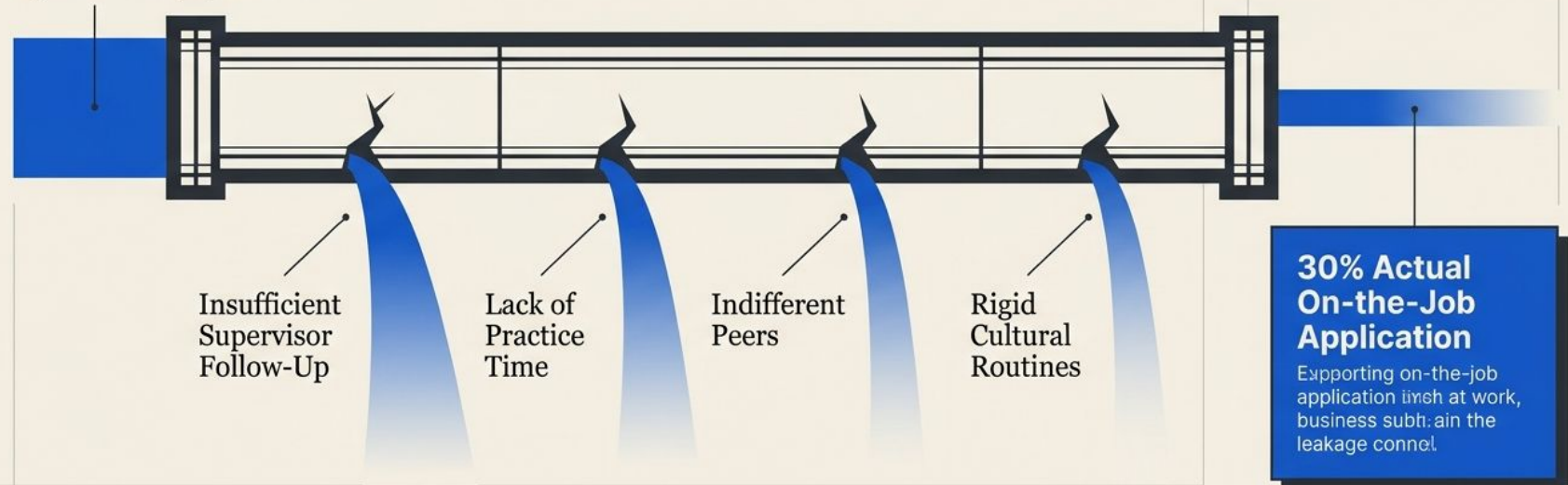
Based on research by Jonathan H. Westover, PhD & Mehner et al.

# The 30% Transfer Gap is a Strategic Risk, Not an HR Inefficiency

Only ~30% of training content is meaningfully applied at work. For organizations facing accelerating digitization, this leakage slows innovation, elevates error rates, and caps adaptive capacity.

## 100% Training Investment

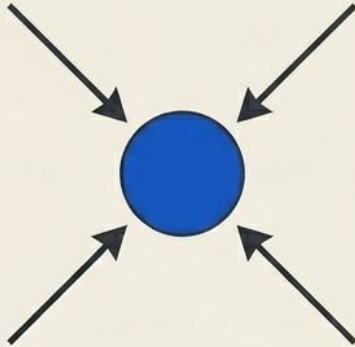
Fully achieved training content through organizations and prepared at work



# The Invisible Target: We Train Individuals, But Capability Travels Through Networks

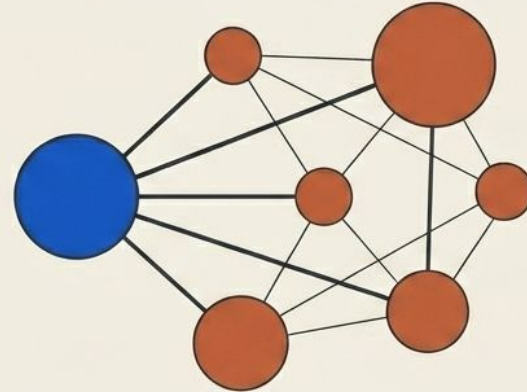
A single trained employee, however motivated, rarely shifts an organization. Training is not a discrete delivery event; it is a trigger for socially distributed learning.

## The Flaw: Content Delivery



Focusing solely on the Trainee's individual ability.

## The Fix: Network Activation



Focusing on the Network through which capability travels.

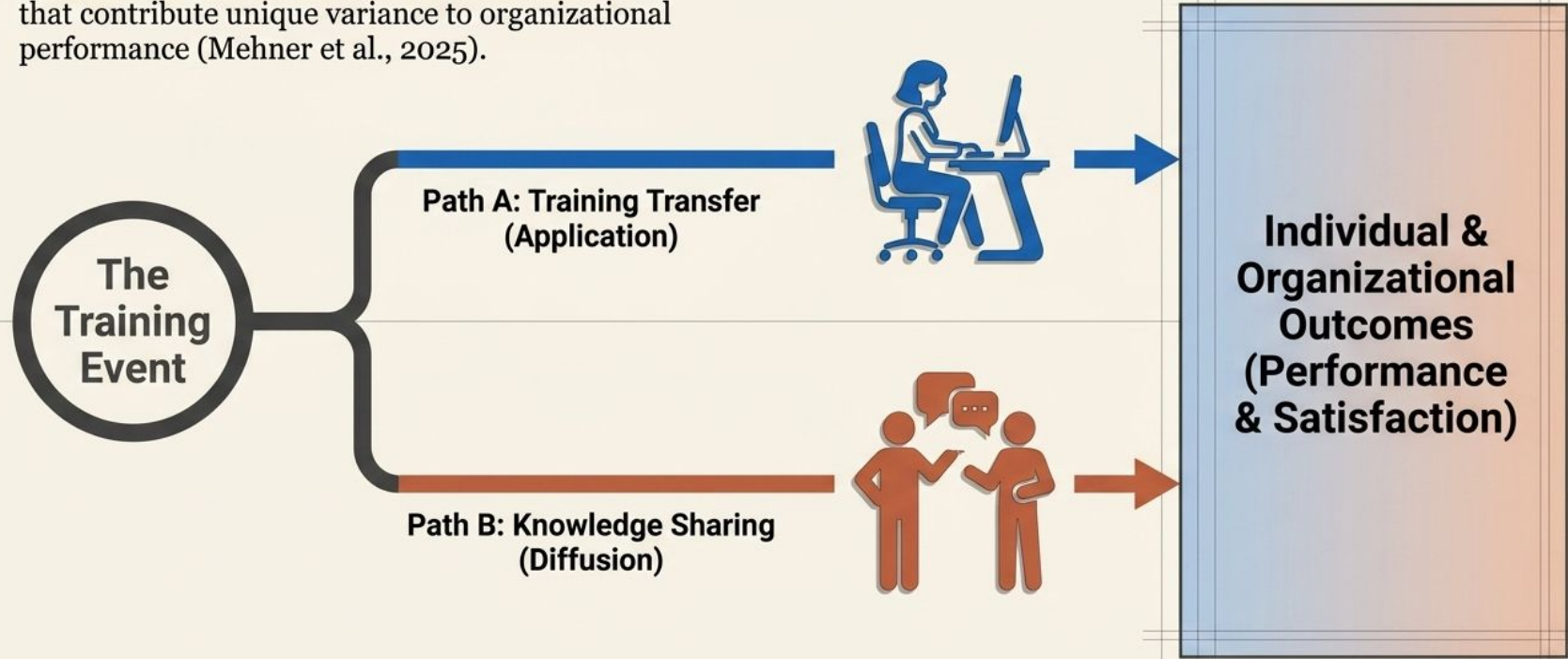
# Upgrading the Mental Model

Dimension	Content Delivery Model	Network-Centric Model
Primary Focus	The Individual Trainee	The Networked Node
Desired Outcome	Skill Acquisition	Application & Diffusion
Role of Peers	Bystanders	Co-Accountability Partners
Measurement Scope	Course Satisfaction (Did they like it?)	Network Expansion (Who did they teach?)

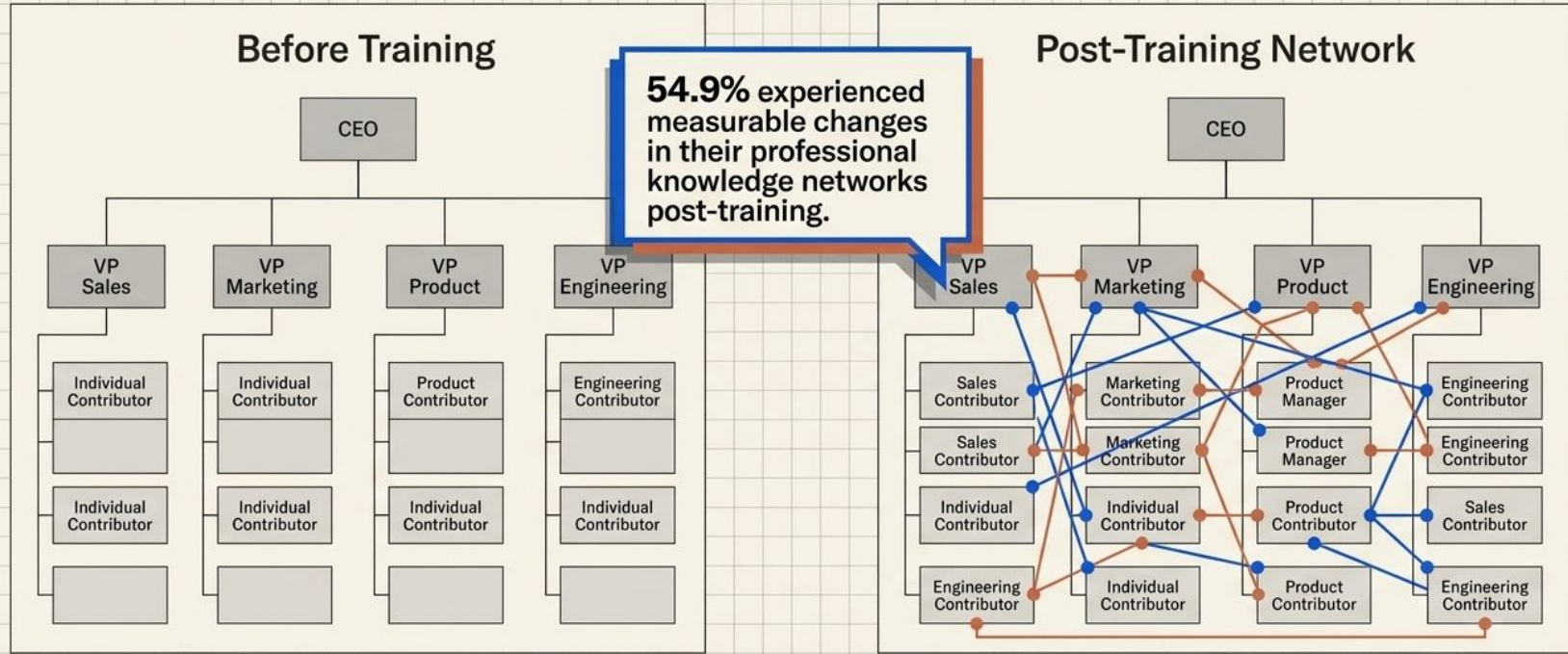
Shifting to a Network-Centric model turns what we know about training transfer into how organizations actually behave the Monday after a workshop ends.

# The Dual Engine of Training ROI

Tracking only application captures only half the value. Transfer and Sharing are parallel, independent processes that contribute unique variance to organizational performance (Mehner et al., 2025).



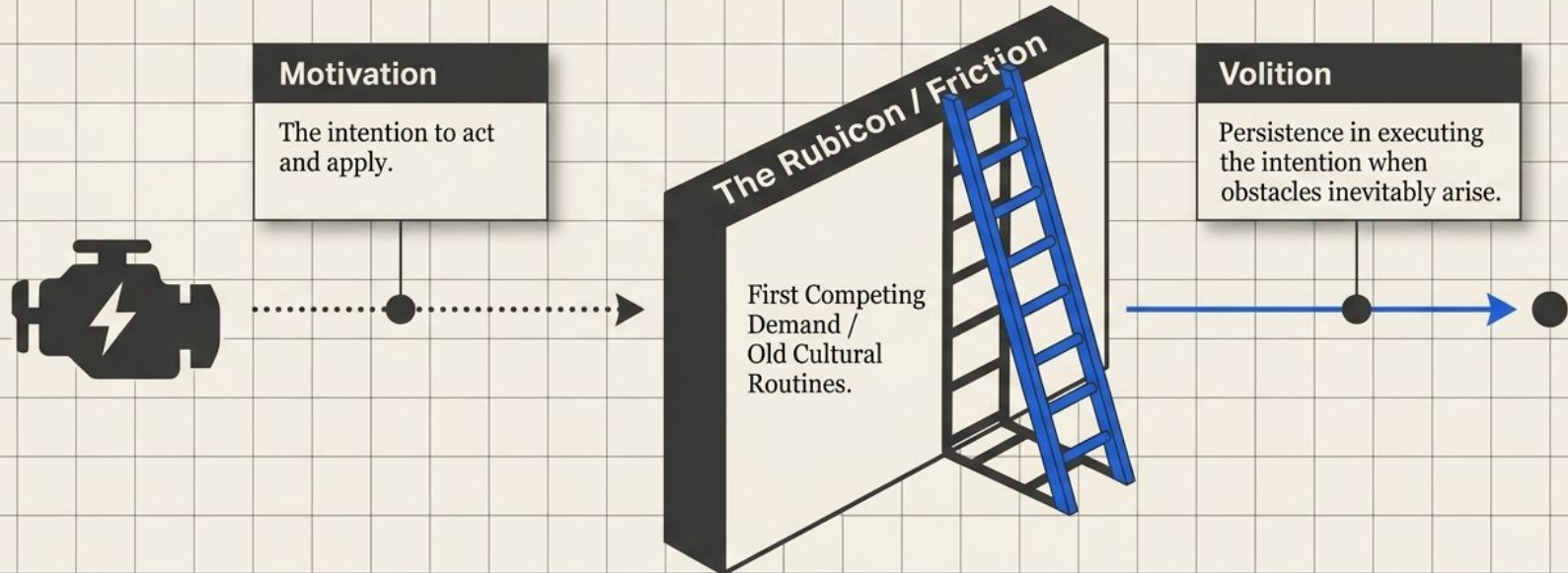
# Training Reorganizes the Corporate Anatomy



*The attempt at training transfer predicts network changes more than the training itself. Employees who try to apply what they learned reach out to new colleagues, deepening organizational capability.*

# The Psychological Engine: Motivation Starts the Journey, Volition Crosses the Finish Line

A motivated colleague without volition abandons new behaviors at the first competing demand. Training design must engineer for both intent and persistence.



# The Architecture of Social Support



## Supervisors: The Catalysts

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**Role:** Drive motivation through expectations, targeted feedback, and resource unlocking.

**Impact:** Consistent predictor of application and transfer.



## Peers: The Multipliers

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**Role:** Drive execution through reciprocity, social exchange, and tandem accountability.

**Impact:** Peer support's effect on knowledge sharing actually outweighs supervisor support ( $\beta = .385$  vs  $.177$ ).

# The Playbook: Activating Supervisor Support

## Tear-Sheet

- **Pre-training contracting:** Defining how learning will be applied.
- **Structured re-entry meetings:** Scheduled within two weeks of completion.
- **Visible assignments:** Tasks requiring new skills in real work.
- **Strategic learning plans:** Integrating formal and informal activities (Blume et al., 2023).

**Target:** Construction Firm IN-DIG-O

**Intervention:** Site managers used a 1-page transfer brief to surface trainee application steps in weekly toolbox meetings.

**Result:** Visible, routine support clarified line-of-sight from training to project work without elaborate new systems.

# The Playbook: Engineering Peer Accountability

## Tear-Sheet

- **Training tandems:** Paired learners co-committing to application.
- **Communities of practice:** Cross-functional groups around shared topics.
- **Reverse-mentoring:** Junior trainees teaching senior colleagues.
- **Structured coaching:** Brief, recurring conversations between trainees.

### Target: European Retail Bank

**Intervention:** Trainees paired with colleagues from different branches, tasked with sharing one concrete application within 30 days.

**Result:** Leveraging social exchange theory, tandems generated unprecedented conversations about new products because sharing carried visible reciprocal value.

# The Playbook: Structuring Knowledge Channels & Volition

## Tear-Sheet

- **If-then planning:** Pre-deciding responses to predictable friction.
- **Teach-back briefings:** Short, calendared post-training demonstration sessions.
- **Volition check-ins:** Framing follow-ups around attempts rather than successes.
- **Template repositories:** Lowering the barrier to wiki contributions.

### **Pharma Company (Volition):**

Embedded a 2-week check-in asking simply, “What did you try? What got in the way?”—normalizing friction.

### **Engineering Firm (Channels):**

Enforced a 60-day teach-back requirement to immediate teams, uploading the resultant slide decks to a shared library.

# Measurement Upgrade: Moving Beyond the Smile Sheet

If transfer and sharing both matter, evaluation systems stopping at participant satisfaction systematically underestimate training value.

## The Old Way



## The New Way

### 1. Multi-source Assessment:

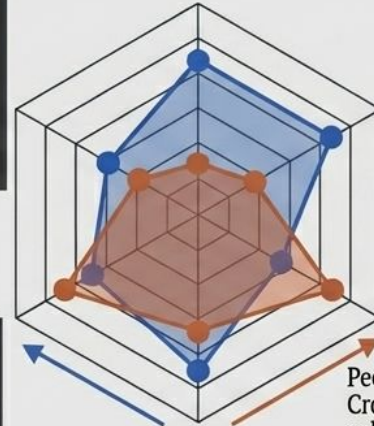
Trainee, supervisor, and peer perspectives (e.g., Q4TE & MEI instruments).

### 3. Network Indicators:

Expanding the survey lens.

### 2. Behavioral Artifacts:

Tracking actual usage (decks, code, decisions).



Transfer & Individual Application

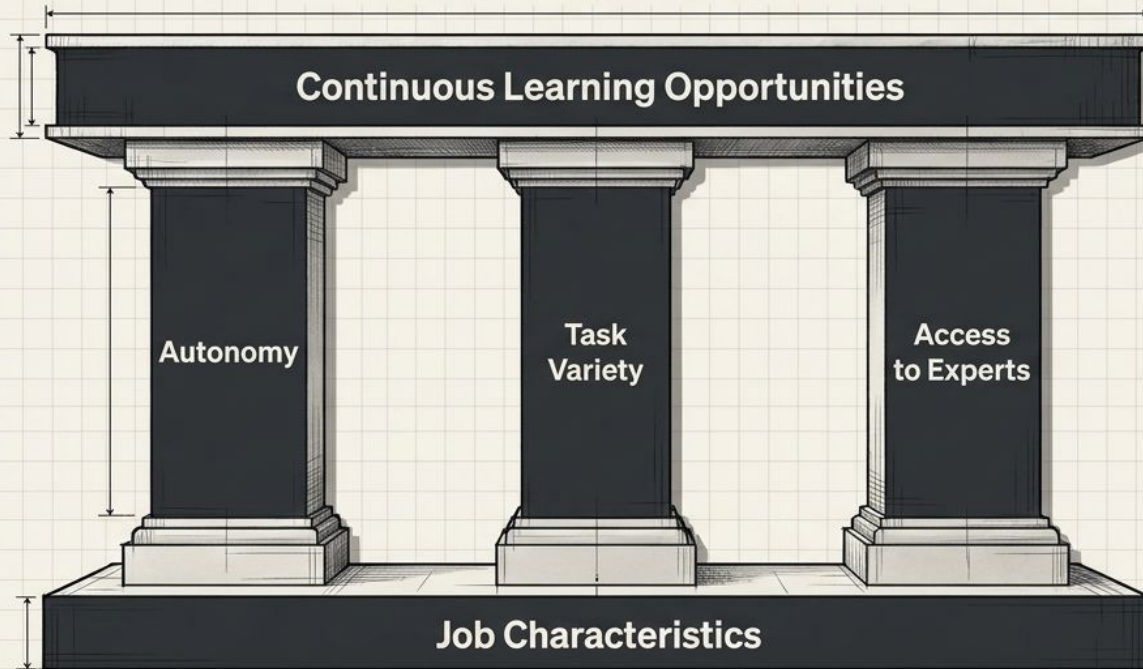
Peer teaching, Cross-functional collaboration

**Example:** A healthcare system simply asked at 3 months: “Who have you learned from on this topic, and who have you taught?” High-performing units correlated precisely with denser knowledge networks.

# Work Design & Culture as Strategic Infrastructure

Organizational learning culture is not a soft variable; it is built by what leaders resource and how jobs are architected.

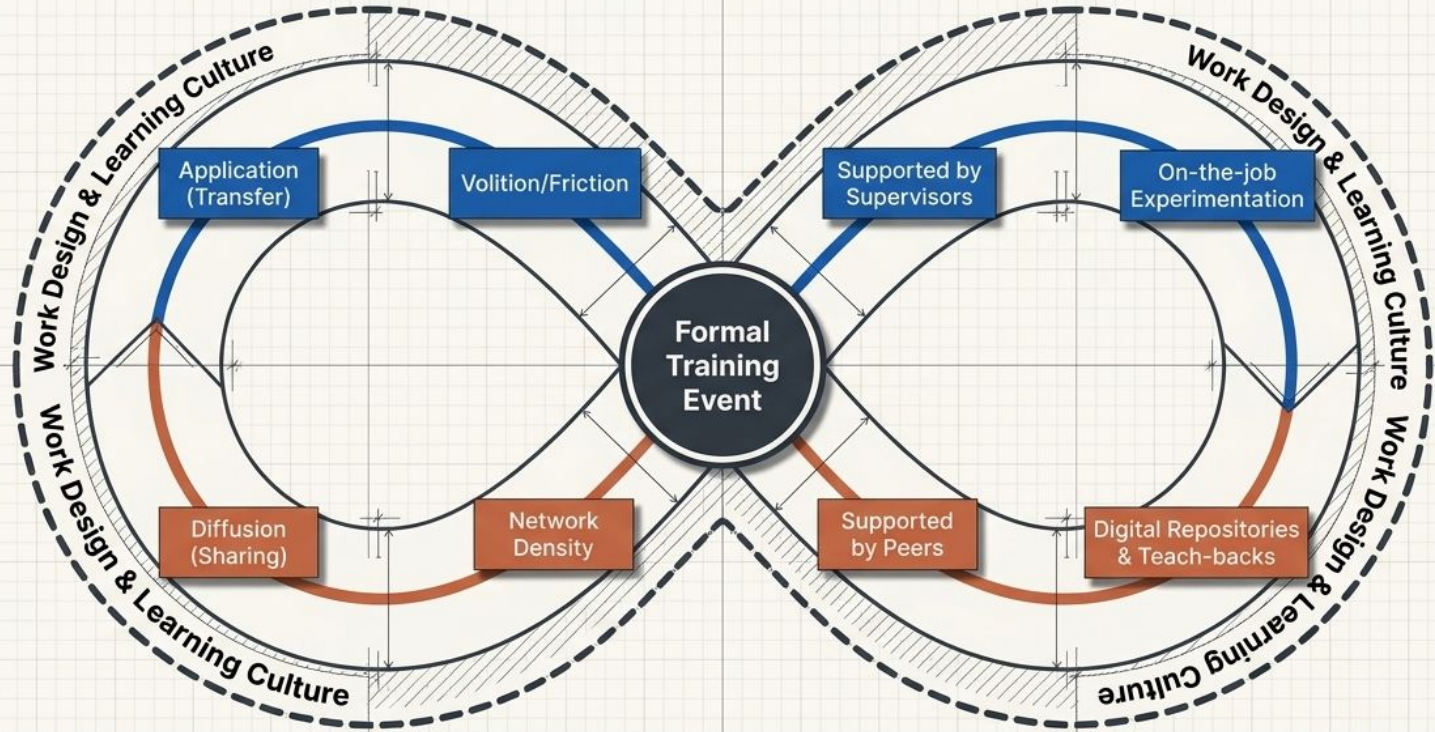
## The Work Design Growth Model



### Key Insight:

When jobs include autonomy and expert access, learning becomes a byproduct of daily work rather than a discrete, isolated activity (Parker, 2017).

# The Continuous Learning System



Training is not the finish line; it is the trigger event that reorganizes the knowledge network. Individual pathways lock into the organizational infrastructure to create a compounding loop of capability.

# Redesigning the Routines of Learning

## 1. Transfer is Necessary, but Insufficient.

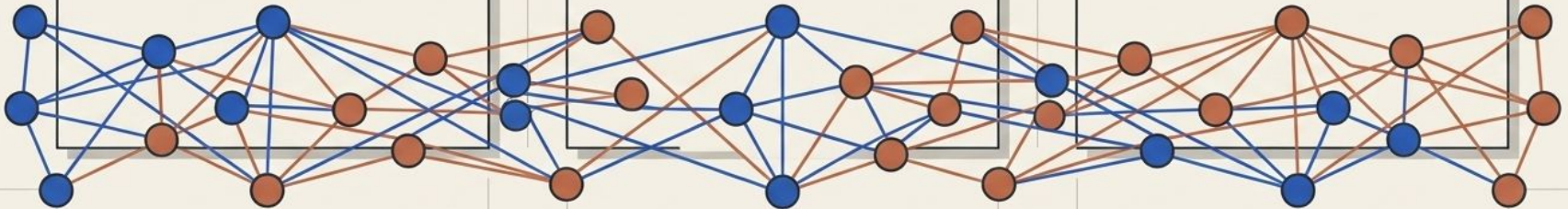
The ROI of training expands exponentially only when knowledge sharing is engineered to reach colleagues who never attended the program.

## 2. Social Support is the Most Actionable Lever.

Supervisor expectations and Supervisor expectations to peer tandems cost nearly nothing to implement but yield the highest variance in organizational capability.

## 3. Measurement Dictates Behavior.

Stop evaluating discrete events. Measure Measure longitudinal network expansion and behavioral artifacts to capture true value.



*The research has done the diagnostic work. The remaining task is to redesign the routines that surround training, so that learning travels.*