

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

The Future of the Profession Formerly Known as Training

Pat Galagan

There's no topic that inflames more passion at the moment than what to call the profession formerly known as training. People who believe the field is fragmenting offer the explanation that it's undergoing a natural metamorphosis. But from what to what? And why?

Galagan explains that there's no clear definition for the field. Learning, performance, and change activities are happening under many different names. Some experts blame the splintering on technologies that expose training's inefficiencies. Others say it's because of a widening difference between learning- and performance-based views of the field. Learning professionals responsible for business information are the new power elite, while outsourcing has made trainers an endangered species.

Some experts make predictions for the future: jobs for educational tech grads, behavior development for executives, structural makeovers for training companies, and training that blends interactivity with solid content.

For complete text, see page 26.

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What's Next?

Chris Taylor

If you're still baffled by the state of the U.S. economy, you're not alone. To find out what's going on, Taylor asked top economists for their take on the situation. Their answers aren't as bleak as you'd think.

Overall, economic fundamentals are improving; that means we can expect to see positive effects, such as increased hiring, business spending, and better wages, soon.

The housing market, which continued to boom in the past few years, is still in pretty good shape. But Taylor warns that rising interest rates and accounting troubles at lenders such as Freddie Mac, combined with high jobless figures and foreclosure rates, could indicate trouble for the future.

Although business spending has not picked up yet, economists are confident that it will soon. The past few quarters have finally seen some small increases in certain business investments, such as software. Trainers have noticed that while larger firms are still doing belt-tightening, midsize firms have started to turn-around and are planning for more training, which they haven't been doing for the past couple of years.

Unemployment, however, is a lagging indicator. It will take a while into an economic turnaround before companies get confident enough to start hiring again. Experts say it could be well into next year before we start to see jobless figures drop.

For complete text, see page 40.

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Admiral Leadership

Josh Bersin

When a U.S. Navy ship captain is promoted to admiral, he suddenly finds himself in a position that requires him to negotiate, collaborate, administer, and lead. To prepare its leaders for that transition, the Navy developed FLAG University, a multiyear program designed to offer officers the chance to acquire skills, competencies, and personal feedback.

The program is a carefully structured continuum of events and experiences presented in a manner that makes sense for the individual's projected career path. The focal point of FLAG University programs consists of five critical competencies essential for every senior leader. From those competencies, the Navy identifies required skills, which can vary from organization to organization.

Instead of hiring a team to monitor operations, the Navy chose to manage the program virtually. The FLAG University Website manages the Senior Leader Learning Plan, handles the self-assessment process, serves as a facility for feedback, and lets executives select courses. Though it's not cutting-edge technology, officials say it provides a single integrated solution to manage a customized executive development plan that supports the professional growth of every senior leader in the Navy.

For complete text, see page 44.

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Meaningful Work

Neal Chalofsky

This is the first in a three-part series that focuses on the classic theories and new studies on why people need meaningful work and the implications for organizations.

Recent studies have shown that people want to have more control and meaning to their work and a better work-life balance. As a result, says Chalofsky, the best employers aren't great because of their perks and benefits, but because of their organizational cultures and policies that promote meaningful work and a nurturing, supportive workplace.

Because many organizations are still trying to motivate workers with an "assembly-line mentality," there has been increasing need for a new paradigm so organizations can meet the modern worker's demands. "We need to accept divergence, multiple perspectives, and incomplete truths—and stop looking for the 'right answer,'" says Chalofsky.

By revisiting the theories of several legendary content motivation theorists, the author describes a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of intrinsic motivation. Meaningful work requires the equal interplay of three elements: self, work, and balance.

For complete text, see page 52.

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