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WHY STRIVE FOR THE CPLP? AN INTERVIEW WITH RYAN PANZER

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Anyone that has been an ATD-MAC member for even a short amount of time has likely met Ryan Panzer. And as you have quickly learned his passion for training, coaching, the CPLP and Badger football is contagious. I recently got a chance to grab lunch with Ryan and we talked about what the CPLP means to him and answer some questions I had as someone in the midst of prepping for the CPLP skill exam myself.

Mike Stefonik: Why did you decide to obtain the CPLP?

Ryan Panzer: I took the CPLP because after designing training and leading workshops my whole career I wanted to explore some different areas of talent development. Specifically, I wanted to learn more about coaching, project management and as someone who works for a business with offices across the world, I wanted to understand what it means to have a global mindset.

Now that you have your CPLP certification, what does it mean to you?

It helps give me a little confidence that I know what I'm talking about and not just trying to fake it until I make it. It also helps me to see L&D as a much larger system. The training we do is connected to change management which is connected to project management and all of these things are interrelated. To be a really good TD professional and trainer you need to know these points of connection and overlap.

When you were studying for the CPLP, what kind of things did you find valuable?

Strong coffee... Being disciplined about studying. Friday afternoons are slow at my office. I set aside 1 hour on Friday's to go through the learning system online. Every Friday afternoon I would do 60 minutes of studying and take the quiz questions. As I was going through the system, I was making flashcards with the app Quizlet. I would definitely recommend flashcards as a study tool.

For anyone that is currently studying for the CPLP, what advice would you give them?

Get the study system. If you're going to take the exam you need the study system. That to me is a must. I didn't take the class. I got a print out of the study system and it was a big thick stack of papers. Don't try to learn it all at once. Do a little bit at a time.

For someone that is considering the CPLP, what advice would you give them?

I would ask them to what extent would it be valuable to have a deeper understanding of the integration between Training and development and all the other areas of the business. Ultimately as trainers we are consultants for business growth and that is what this exam really shows you. If you feel like you are stuck it's a great tool to get unstuck. If you feel like you're not confident with what you are creating it's a great tool to build your confidence.

While you were studying for the CPLP, what did you learn?

The first thing I learned is that learning doesn't happen because you tell somebody something and it doesn't happen because you attended a workshop. Learning takes place within a much broader system. To really understand how to effect learning you need to understand that system. Its really helpful to know how to write a learning objective or build a slide deck but what the CPLP will show you is a better landscape you are navigating and how to best achieve your goals along that landscape.

What from the studying for the CPLP or taking the exam have you been able to take away and apply to your everyday job as an Instructional Designer?

One of the big things the exam stresses is the importance of having a project team with clear roles and responsibilities. I think before the exam I was probably doing too much instructional design just by myself, head down get it done. Since I passed the test, I have had

more subject matter experts involvement. I have been more intentional about seeking out feedback on the courses we are building. I've been more focused on managers taking ownership of their own learning as well as their team's learning.

When you were studying, which of the 10 competencies did you enjoy the most and which one was the most challenging.

I enjoyed Project Management the most because that is what I was the newest to. Examining the frameworks of project management and looking at the different roles on a project team. Then thinking, how do we incorporate those into a training context. That actually surprised me because I didn't think I would enjoy that but I found it incredibly interesting.

I think project management was also the most difficult because I realized there are mistakes I'm making with my projects. There are things that I am doing that could have better involvement of stakeholders. I could be more clear about the skill gap that training is supposed to close. So, it was difficult in the sense that I am doing instructional design pretty well but there is so much more I could do and so much more potential out there. So many more creative tactics and processes I could adopt to really get into a better spot.

What else do you have to say about the CPLP?

I jokingly said 'find out how a multiple-choice test can become the most rewarding professional development experience of your career' and it really wasn't that much of a joke. It was incredibly expansive of my perspectives it strengthened my networking community. I just had a very strong sense of accomplishment and achievement having passed it. I did an epic fist pump when I got the email that I passed the exam.

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