

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

## ROI of E-Learning: Closing In

Paul Harris

More than ever, companies are looking to e-learning to help achieve their strategic goals, but they also expect proof of results before investing in this often expensive approach.

Consequently, the purveyors of e-learning solutions can no longer get away with citing cost-savings related to travel, instructors, and hours of lost productivity. Instead, they need to sell on such points as improved productivity and shorter learning curve.

The trouble is that those outcomes aren't so easily measured. The question is, How do you ensure that ROI calculations really determine the true value of e-learning to an enterprise?

Expert opinions and studies abound; vendors offer free courses to customers. Harris talked to e-learning directors, who said they're looking at e-learning as a strategic and major element of blended learning—and they expect to be able to determine whether e-learning made a difference, not just a cost-savings. "We expect multilevel measurement," including performance, says one.

Harris finds that learning professionals have to become partners with the business units.

*For complete text, see page 30.*

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## CLO Accountability

Shari Caudron

*Chief learning officer* has been the hot new title for the past few years, but now the honeymoon's over and the real work must begin.

In the depressed economy, these learning executives must demonstrate their value to their organizations. Caudron points out that the term *CLO* is an umbrella for many titles, including vice president of learning, corporate learning executive, and director of learning and knowledge. Hundreds now populate *Fortune* 500 firms such as Cigna and Dell. But their propagation doesn't signify a permanent corporate commitment to learning. Like the companies they work in, CLOs must prove themselves on a day-to-day basis.

Senior executives want proof that learning will help the bottom line. So, these first-generation CLOs are having to show accountability. Mainly, they have to show top management that learning isn't just about training. And they're having to do that in a function complicated by a complex global environment, shorter product cycles, huge uncertainty, and ruthless rapidity of change.

Caudron talked to CLOs and executives seeking people to fill that role and came up with key competencies and questions to ask.

*For complete text, see page 36.*

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## Sight Mammals

Jay Cross

Humans are sight mammals, proposes e-learning guru Jay Cross. They learn almost twice as well from images *and* words as from words alone. Visuals engage both hemispheres of the human brain. Pictures translate across cultures, education levels, and age groups. Yet, most content of corporate learning is text. Schools spend years teaching how to read but only hours on visual literacy. It's high time for us to open our eyes to the possibilities, Cross asserts.

Visual literacy—whether on paper or electronic—accelerates learning because the richness of the whole picture can be taken in at a glance. Visual metaphors unleash new ideas and spark innovation. Having a sharper eye increases the depth of one's perception. Rather than walk you through the nuances of color, tone, texture, proportion, and so forth, Cross shares several ways that visuals have contributed to his own learning.

People can create pictures as well as look at them. Cross often draws mind maps to brainstorm on his own and to clarify his thinking. He also assembles simple pictures to convey concepts, using PaintShop Pro.

The article shows approaches to using visuals that you can adapt.

*For complete text, see page 47.*

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## Distributed Intelligence

Patricia A. McLagan

In this fourth and final article in McLagan's series on change, she focuses on something termed *distributed intelligence*. That's when everyone in an organization, regardless of role or level, is proactive in solving problems, making decisions, and taking creative action as the need arises, without waiting to be told what to do. In other words, change is everybody's business. Organizations that foster distributed intelligence excel in their markets and in the global economy.

McLagan uses the metaphor of the human body. The skin senses heat or cold and launches signals to the brain to enable the body to react appropriately to the stimulus. A technological example of distributed intelligence is the skin of a Stealth plane: It senses its environment and adjusts its flight pattern accordingly—to avoid radar, for example. McLagan also points to the Internet as an example of distributed intelligence. It reinvents itself daily through the actions of its users.

The article describes the new competencies and role of leaders in leveraging distributed intelligence for financial success and human performance. McLagan admits it won't be easy to think in this new way, but she shows how world research supports moving in this direction.

*For complete text, see page 52.*

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