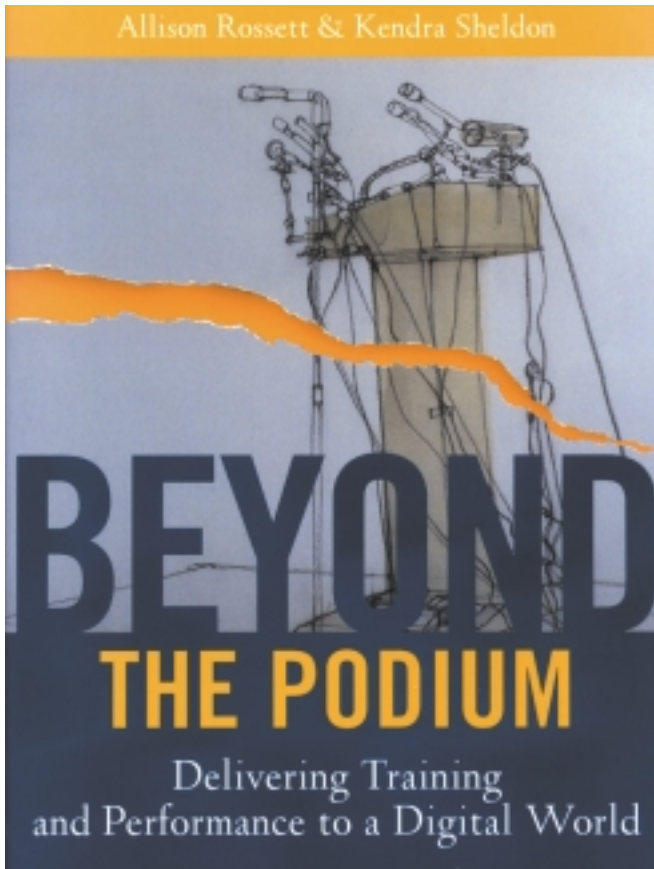


# BOOKS



## Beyond the Podium

Reviewed by Deanne Bryce

Have you ever felt like Dorothy when she opened her eyes to the bright, new world called Oz and realized she wasn't in Kansas anymore? Perhaps it was when you first woke up in your dorm room or first apartment no longer surrounded by the comforts of your childhood home. Reality checks at such moments can be exciting *and* scary.

Trainers are now waking up to a new and somewhat unsettling digital world—and all its new demands on their expertise. In their book, *Beyond the Podium: Delivering Training and Performance to a Digital World*,

Allison Rossett, professor of educational technology at San Diego State University, and her co-author, Kendra Sheldon, provide some perspective.

The first chapter contains a statement that may disappoint some readers: “This book is not a how to do training technologies or how to do performance consulting.” Training and development professionals, like their learners and sponsors, have come to expect fast answers to what they consider to be skill gaps.

The realization that this book wasn't going to provide fast answers upset me. I didn't like the title or the



### The Tao at Work: On Leading and Following

By Stanley M. Herman

The world changes in ways you'd never dream possible. All that change can cause you to feel out of balance—even at work. To help you get centered again, Stanley Herman has interpreted the 81 verses of the Tao to “reflect ... modern day struggles.”

Herman's business-focused translations include such insights as “Calm at rest, composed in action, steady in tumult.” Some readers may read the text straight through; others may read one entry or parable a day, allowing time for reflection. Whatever your preference, when you feel your equilibrium slipping, *The Tao at Work* can help.

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass;  
www.josseybass.com. 136 pages.  
US\$14.95

### The Keys to Conquering Change: 100 Tales of Success

By Joanne G. Sujansky and  
John van Sprang

Change is the inescapable opportunity, according to Joanne Sujansky and John van Sprang. Everyone, at one time or another, faces change: new job, loss of a job; marriage, divorce; birth of a child, loss of a loved one. How you handle that change is key. In their new book, Sujansky and van Sprang provide 100 personal tales from people of all walks of life and cultures in the hope that readers will learn by example.

The personal tales cover everything from your spouse losing his or her job to the benefits of having a coach. Each chapter includes feedback on the stories and a tool to help you organize your thoughts and make the most out of change.

Pittsburgh: KEYGroup;  
www.keygrp.com. 273 pages. US\$19.95

## APPENDIX BOOKS

cover. We don't need to be told to move beyond the podium. So, I refocused on the possibility that I might discover something new. As I read on, I became impressed by the clear structure of the book.

It's divided into two sections: 1) a broad review of where the t&d profession stands and what it should be working to accomplish and 2) an exploration of emerging trends such as performance improvement, technology options, informal learning, and knowledge management. Each chapter has such features as interviews with professionals, sample slide shows, and resource tables.

You may find some of the information redundant, especially if you've read *Performance Consulting: Moving Beyond Training* by Dana Gaines Robinson and James C. Robinson or acted as a performance consultant. However, tidbits of insight are there for the taking.

For example, Rossett and Sheldon ask why t&d professionals still don't use performance consulting. They write, “When you talk to professionals about their efforts to incorporate performance perspectives into their work, they often applaud the power of performance concepts while simultaneously admitting the difficulties associated with holding hands across conventional boundaries. Pointing at hasty leadership, distracted colleagues, and ingrained habits, many are stymied.”

The reality is that trainers value performance but run into obstacles when they try to put performance perspectives to work. Reading the authors'

comments made me wonder whether the training and development profession is as full of excuses for not applying its knowledge about what works as its learners or sponsors are.

To combat that neglect, Rossett and Sheldon provide practical advice throughout the text. For example, Frank Rogalewicz, the manager of a regional group training department for Guardian Life Insurance, comments on the concept of conducting analysis prior to training: “There are many analysis models, and they're more alike than different. Pick one that is simple for you, internalize it, and use it to guide your analyses.”

The practical advice is supported by interviews with Marc Rosenberg, Jack Phillips, Margo Murray, Ruth Clark, and Sivasailam Thiagi. Those interviews are an unexpected treat and a brilliant way for readers to learn what many distinguished professionals have to say on the subject.

The authors also provide a sample slide show for each concept. The intent is to help professionals explain and win support for their initiatives, but the approach seems contradictory to the book's focus. Nothing is more podium-like and less engaging than a bunch of slides. A more innovative resource would be a facilitated round-table discussion (without a podium) or an interactive learning activity for each concept.

Each chapter also contains a resource table and a traditional end-of-the-chapter resource list. The resource table is arranged uniquely, organizing

Trainers are now waking up  
to a new and digital world.

resources (Websites, books, online communities, and so forth) by the amount of time you have to gather information—an hour, a day, or a week. You'll also find links to interesting Websites imbedded within the text though it would have been helpful to have a compiled list.

Do trainers still use a podium? Though Rossett and Sheldon don't state it specifically, the truth is that many professional trainers don't use a podium, but subject matter experts who lead classes might. So, the stereotype still exists that training is an expert at the front of a room with a microphone. To overcome that perception, the authors provide a diverse and comprehensive look at the training and development profession that leaves you energized and eager to make a contribution to the field.

Thanks to compiled resources and a structured framework, you won't be like Dorothy trying to get back to Kansas. Instead, you can boldly embrace the new world and become a guardian of learning who gets results.

*Beyond the Podium: Delivering Training and Performance to a Digital World*

by Allison Rossett and Kendra Sheldon. Alexandria, Virginia, and San Francisco: ASTD and Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer; [www.astd.org](http://www.astd.org) and [www.pfeiffer.com](http://www.pfeiffer.com). 312 pp. US\$29.95.  
Circle 290 on reader service card.

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