



SYNERGIZING HR AND TRAINING

Talent management is creating a collaborative relationship between **HR** and **training**.

By Tim Sosbe



Recent research

forecasts an ongoing convergence of training and human resources operations, all coalescing into a broader talent management function. It's integration; it's a holistic approach; it's synergy.

Imagine an organization so committed to research and development that it has multiple labs in constant operation. Now imagine all those labs working independent of each other, but toward the same goal. Imagine knowledge being kept secret, competitive hackles being raised, and successes on one hand unavoidably being offset by failures on the other.

Is this the picture of productive human capital management?

For an increasing number of organizations, the answer is clearly “no.” Recent research forecasts an ongoing convergence of training and human resources operations, all coalescing into a broader talent management function. It's integration; it's a holistic approach; it's synergy.

It's all that and more.

“This is way past alignment,” says Nancy Lewis, vice president of sales and on-demand learning for IBM. “This is having a fully integrated view of all that we do—recruit, onboard, develop, source, deploy out talent—it's a view of how it all works together. It's about optimizing the workforce.”

Others admit that the impending skills gap is increasing teamwork among workplace learning and performance professionals and the HR staff.

“It's all about value creation and preparing for the war for talent,” says Bill Kline, president of Kline Consultant and former vice president of human resources and chief learning officer for Delta Airlines.

“It's hard to predict,” adds Edward Betof, vice president of talent management and chief learning officer for Becton, Dickinson and Company (BD).

Shared critical functions

ASTD and Brandon Hall Research recently conducted an online poll to examine the relationship between training and HR departments in the business world. Of the 340 respondents, 52 percent work for organizations in which training is governed by HR, while 25 percent are in separate but equal departments.

For those supporting the move to broader people management, the news was

good: Sixty percent of respondents believe training and HR operations are converging in their organizations, with 90 percent predicting that trend will continue.

IBM is a good example of a company committed to comprehensive people practices. In her role leading learning solutions design and development and all of IBM's worldwide sales learning, Lewis “spends an unbelievable amount of time” handling that integration, which she describes as “the nexus of what we're all focused on.”

“It's entirely about having a broader, more cohesive, and more comprehensive view of the talent process,” she says. “All businesses are looking for ways to be more nimble. The way to be more nimble is to think horizontally across the workflow. The workflow in this case is about people. You become more professional and more productive when you think about learning and development as it relates to recruitment and the procurement of talent.”

Of course, recruitment is only one talent management function that respondents deem critical to their organizations' success in the next three to five years. Respondents also cited training and development (76 percent), executive and leadership development (68 percent), succession

Which of these functions will be most critical to your organization's success in the next three to five years? *(Select all that apply)*

	Percentage
Training and development	76%
Recruitment and selection	69%
Executive and leadership development	68%
Succession planning	59%
Human performance improvement	58%
Overall talent management	55%
Performance management	54%
Career development	52%
Coaching and feedback	47%
Compensation	25%
Benefits	19%
Credentialing	10%

Source: ASTD/Brandon Hall Research



planning (59 percent), and performance improvement (58 percent) as critical organizational functions that need to be addressed.

The survey finds that many common talent management functions are owned by either the HR or the training departments, or they are currently shared, but it also finds that some are managed differently, including at the department level by individual managers.

The survey also shows how respondents believe talent management functions should be controlled in the next three to five years. By a wide margin, respondents backed the integrated management of these mission-critical functions.

Betof backs that integration as well. In fact, so much so that he has spent a year working with BD chairman and senior vice president of HR to take a bigger step in that direction. In July, Betof will begin a phased retirement (he's off to the University of Pennsylvania to become senior fellow for a credentialing program for chief learning officers). According to Betof, his departure has fueled BD's shift toward the integrated approach.

At BD, everything in the learning space is done to complement and align with other talent and people initiatives—integrated both horizontally and vertically.

"We want them integrated," he says. "I can imagine in some other companies there might be reasons against doing that, but in our company we don't want [the initiatives] separated."

The issue is a "burning topic" currently for another global enterprise, CitiGroup. The company is currently in a restruc-

turing process, but people processes in the company are likely to remain a mixed model.

Until her retirement in May, Scotty King served as director of global learning and development for CitiGroup, which reported to the organization's director of HR. King's role is responsible for all learning initiatives across all business functions and geographic lines. Learning for staff functions, such as legal, compliance, and finance, also reports to HR, while business-specific training typically reports to that particular business or its HR function.

King expects the future of the mixed model to include a move toward centralization and regional centers of excellence for the 330,000 learners in 100 countries.

"There will always be a strong connection to our businesses and to the geography with strong local representation," she says. "Human resources at Citi are all about talent. We are a company whose product is the creativity and expertise of our people, so we really do view learning as part of the manufacturing process of the product that we offer. Learning needs to be a strategic lever for our business leaders."

"We have found that the human resources folks are already providing similar tools and levers in succession planning and talent," she adds. "So the generalist who

partners with our business managers and function heads across the organization becomes a representative for all these different processes and systems that support the evolution of our talent. Learning has to be an important component of that packaging.”

Teamwork

Fortunately for many organizations such as CitiGroup and BD, competitive spirit seems to not be a factor. According to 77 percent of survey respondents, the relationship between HR and training is collaborative, not competitive.

That spirit of collaboration is no surprise to David Vance, former president of Caterpillar University, who retired in January after 20 years with the Peoria, Illinois, manufacturing giant.

“That strategic focus, that partnering, is something we tried to do at the beginning with Caterpillar University,” Vance says. The transformation to HR and training as strategic partners came about “before it was fashionable.”

As Vance’s successor, Christopher Glynn, comes to the role from his position leading organizational development and succession planning, Vance expects more integration.

“A lot of other companies are already there,” Vance says. “When I have meetings with my former CLO colleagues, I’d say a good number of them already have broader responsibilities. I think all that’s coming together under the broader name of talent management. I think there are efficiencies and synergies there, and I think it’s a lot easier from an organizational point of view to have one single contact for all [functions].”

Respondent Profile

Most of the respondents (52 percent) work in a training department that reports directly to HR or in a department that is separate but equal to HR (25 percent). Forty-six percent of respondents work in companies that have between 100 and 3,499 employees. Another 25 percent work in companies with 10,000 or more employees.

Of course, as Vance points out, not all HR functions need the same level of alignment. Compensation and benefits, for instance, don’t necessarily have the same kind of synergies, though it does make sense to tie them in. (Survey respondents agree that compensation and benefits are currently managed by HR alone, and they see little incentive to expand to a shared responsibility.)

There will be other challenges to integration, Vance says, including a learning curve for learners. But in the long run, it will create a more unified approach.

“I think that’s where talent management will get us—to integration of the services that make sense,” says Vance.

Talent management and the unified approach promise to take businesses to new destinations as well, Kline says.

“What it does is tie HR and learning into a driver for organizational change by creating a learning environment

Who owns these functions in your organization?

	HR	Training	Shared	Neither
Recruitment and selection	87%	2%	10%	1%
Training and development	12%	65%	21%	2%
Human performance improvement	26%	29%	34%	11%
Executive and leadership development	28%	35%	26%	12%
Performance management	48%	12%	30%	9%
Compensation	91%	0%	3%	6%
Benefits	94%	0%	1%	5%
Succession planning	44%	13%	21%	21%
Coaching and feedback	22%	26%	37%	15%
Career development	25%	25%	33%	16%
Credentialing	32%	16%	14%	38%
Overall talent management	39%	12%	31%	18%

Source: ASTD/Brandon Hall Research

Who should own these functions in the next three to five years, given conditions in your organization or industry?

	HR	Training	Shared	Neither
Recruitment and selection	71%	3%	25%	2%
Training and development	8%	69%	22%	1%
Human performance improvement	16%	39%	42%	3%
Executive and leadership development	14%	43%	40%	4%
Performance management	28%	22%	45%	5%
Compensation	88%	1%	8%	3%
Benefits	91%	1%	5%	4%
Succession planning	28%	17%	48%	7%
Coaching and feedback	13%	34%	48%	5%
Career development	17%	29%	52%	2%
Credentialing	28%	25%	31%	16%
Overall talent management	20%	18%	58%	4%

Source: ASTD/Brandon Hall Research

that supports the business and the employee value proposition,” Kline says. “That becomes the real key. Companies are asking more of their people, but they’re also giving them the chance to grow and develop.”

Kline has seen all that before. Prior to his work at Delta, Kline worked for General Electric, where he foresaw the 1990s as a decade for aligning learning and development into the HR tool kit. Since then, he’s seen increased movement toward talent management.

“I think this is really the decade in which the learning professional moves away from traditional thoughts about training to more holistic views as a performance consultant,” Kline said. “That’s a whole different realm than sitting back and coming up with a training program.”

Future challenges

Today’s software selection and technological capabilities only fuel integration. Kevin Oakes, president and CEO of i4cp, the Institute for Corporate Productivity, expects that “it’s only going to come together at a faster clip.”

But of course, Oakes points out, the learning curve runs both ways. In these new days, HR professionals may need to overcome complexity and develop a better understanding of the nuances of the learning profession. Learning professionals have their own mountains to conquer: the understanding and acceptance of talent management.

“The learning professionals that embrace [talent management] are going to be much better positioned in the long term in their organizations to have an impact,” Oakes

says. “The ones who go the opposite way, I think, are going to be left out.”

With 69 percent of respondents believing training should continue to control training, it’s safe to say the future integration of human capital management and development will offer some challenges. While it’s true that some people professionals will benefit from less competition for development dollars, Oakes predicts that some learning leaders may soon have to deal with control issues. Many organizations, he believes, will find it more natural for the head of HR, rather than the head of learning, to lead talent management offerings.

“That’s a potential threat to learning executives,” Oakes says. “Their so-called seat at the table moves farther and farther away from them.”

But as the saying goes, challenges are just opportunities in disguise. Learning leaders may have some hurdles ahead, but the chance for impact is also higher.

“It’s an exciting time to be in learning,” says IBM’s Lewis. “It really expands the impact that we can have across the business. It challenges us to think of things in new ways. It’s very flattering. I really do believe that learning above many things is at the nexus, at the center. It’s the essential linchpin for the entire HR talent ambition.” **T+D**

Tim Sosbe is editorial and events director for Brandon Hall Research; tim@brandon-hall.com.