EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

Harnessing the Power of Action Learning

Michael Marquardt

Action learning offers a unique and amazing power: Simultaneously, it solves difficult challenges and develops people and organizations at minimal cost. How does it do that? By integrating a problem, an action learning group, an action learning coach, a questioning process, and a commitment to learning, and by following these steps:

- Form a group.
- Present a problem or task to the group.
- Reframe the problem.
- Determine goals.
- Develop action strategies.
- Take action.
- Capture learning.

The dynamic interactive process used by action learning groups at companies such as GE and Boeing allows them to see problems in fresh new ways. Those groups would agree that action learning works because it interweaves a wide array of organizational, psychological, sociological, and educational theories with elements of ethics, political science, engineering, and systems thinking.

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The State of Learning Analytics

Jeffrey Berk

The term *learning analytics* describes a set of activities an organization can do to help it understand how to better train and develop employees and customers. In 2003, Knowledge Advisors conducted a survey of more than 100 organizations to uncover these key elements of learning analytics: technology, process, stakeholders, and strategy. Following are two of the four key elements and a sampling from the survey findings. **Technology.** When importing data to learning analytics tools from "feeder" systems, training organizations use LMSs (learning management systems) and online evaluation tools most often. Like an LMS three years ago, learning analytics systems are "nice to have" now, but within the next 12 to 18 months they will be a necessity to ensure that learning investments are monitored in a way that shows relevancy to business. **Process.** Most training providers don't have a standard set of key performance indicators that they measure and monitor regularly, but they should.

The survey results show a strong movement toward more formal measurement of training investments. Because the greatest demand for analytics is above Level 3, organizations should strive to create the right processes and use the most efficient and effective technologies to make Level 3, 4, and ROI analyses practical.

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Virtual Communities at Caterpillar Foster Knowledge Sharing

Vicki Powers

For more than 75 years, Caterpillar has enjoyed a genuine culture of sharing. Yet, as the organization grew, its 70,000 worldwide employees lost track of people and knowledge. To rectify that, and keep employees from reinventing the wheel in business units across the globe, in 1999 the company launched Knowledge Networks, a Web-based system delivered via the Internet with 12 communities. Community members were able to distribute validated information that had been reviewed and approved by a community manager.

In 2001, Caterpillar formed Caterpillar University in response to changes in the industry and moved Knowledge Networks from the engineering arena to the auspices of Caterpillar University. But that move brought about a need to tweak the usability of Knowledge Networks for nontechnical users such as dealers. As of February 2004, Caterpillar's communities reached the 3000 mark.

The belief at Caterpillar is that the high number of small, targeted communities is manageable and beneficial. It must be working: The organization's communities of practice have improved work quality, product design, and decision making, and increased collaboration and teamwork.

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Making Results Visible

Calhoun Wick and Roy Pollock

It's a widespread trend: Learning professionals are asked increasingly to make visible the results of t&d programs. This article presents success stories from well-known corporations.

For example, **Hewlett-Packard'**s Dynamic Leadership program was created with the purpose to help leaders accelerate time-to-value through "authentic conversations." A Web-based follow-through system, Friday5s, presented rich Level 3 data provided by participants. Using that data and quantitative data gathered through an electronic survey, the ROI for the program was calculated. The results: In the first year, the ROI was 15 times the cost of the program.

Federated Department Stores used case studies to show the ROI of its program, Leadership Choice. The purpose of the program was to increase sales and profit performance. Participants who reported good progress were contacted for follow-up interviews to reveal case studies that "told a retailing story," enabling training leaders to present the impact of the program in a compelling way to management.

From those and other success stories, trainers learn to teach and measure what matters to business leaders and that to produce business results, learning must be transferred from the training experience to the person's job. If there is no transfer, there will be no business result, no matter how much was "learned."

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