EXECUTIVE
SUMMARIES

Wake-Up Call:
The Real Decision Makers

Paul Harris

Corporate training departments are increasingly left out of the loop when business units make e-learning purchases—a sign someone considers the training function irrelevant. Suppliers now call directly on business units or the executive suite, bypassing traditional points of contact. It's time for a wake-up call.

The trend of seeking alternate channels by vendors and the emergence of initiative-based learning elicits frustration and alarm from directors of training, who worry their authority is being undermined. But the reality is that, in difficult times, centralized training departments often experience cutbacks, while business units, such as sales, forge on with large budgets and an urgent need for training and short-term results.

Fortunately, it's not all doom and gloom. An air of cooperation between training departments and business units is sweeping through successful companies, such as Eastman Kodak. Harris offers lessons for dealing with this trend and avoiding damaging rifts in the learning environment.

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Post-9/11 Training

Michael D. Lee

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, managers became more aware of the powerful effect of culture on their workforces and the potential for cultural misunderstandings to affect productivity and profitability adversely. In response, companies have changed the way they approach diversity training. Budgets have increased. More attention is being paid to culture and its effect on learning styles. And, perhaps most important, diversity training is finally being separated from liability reduction and linked to retention.

Current shortages of skilled professionals in the United States, as well as an expanding global workforce, have many companies searching abroad for talented workers. With that comes an increased demand for cultural awareness and sensitivity. Though training exists for American workers overseas, little is being done to help immigrants understand the complexities and attitudes of American culture.

Lee examines the progression of diversity training since that tragic September day, calls for increased action at the executive level, and tests your knowledge of diversity awareness.

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The Dark Side of
360-Degree Feedback

Scott Wimer

During the past decade, 360-degree feedback has taken off, with most organizations utilizing some version. It can be a powerful tool, with which people learn about themselves. Unfortunately, that kind of self-assessment isn't always positive. Negative feedback can sting. And though the 360-degree process aims to prevent people from lashing out, it's easy for participants to be less than objective. The process is only as good as the effort of participants in providing an accurate snapshot of the employee.

When an individual seeks intensive personal development assistance or is singled out, that's when 360-degree feedback frequently shows its dark side. Of course, it doesn't have to. Here are some considerations before adopting 360-degree feedback.
● Negative feedback can be more disturbing when the origin is unclear and you're left to wonder about its source and accuracy.
● Recipients aren't the only victims of hazardous feedback. People who feel victimized by feedback are more likely to spread their negativity to those they believe are responsible.
● When distributing feedback, ensure it's delivered with care and sensitivity, and that recipients feel supported.

It's naïve to think that insight alone inspires recipients to change. Without ongoing support and follow-up, you'll never see the sunny side of 360.

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The New Strategic Six Sigma

Dick Smith and Jerry Blakeslee

Six Sigma is evolving. Born in the manufacturing bays of Motorola, this statistical quality improvement technique worked wonders at the operational level, cutting costs and reducing business cycle times. But, for top companies, the new strategic Six Sigma is proving to be just as indispensable. Whether CEOs use it to drive revenue growth or systematic, sustainable culture change, the potential of six Sigma has profound implications for leadership teams.

Smith and Blakeslee guide you through the process of Strategic Six Sigma implementation. Along the way, you'll gain a better understanding of the cultural requirements for successful transformation.

The introduction of strategic Six Sigma principles and work practices requires rigorous training beyond the statistical and analytical principles. Smith and Blakeslee break down the introduction into seven modules:
1. Executive awareness
2. Champion simulation
3. Alignment of Six Sigma implementation to business strategies
4. Infrastructure development
5. Introduction to business process management
6. Voice of the market and customer
7. Selection and development.

Yet, throughout the training runs a constant thread: Leaders can't stop communicating the urgency of change.

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