

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

How to Partner With a Training Supplier

Michael Rosenthal

As training budgets continue to tighten, it's becoming even more important to strike the best deal ever.

Rosenthal suggests that professional development managers stop haggling with their vendors and start negotiating. That means identifying the company's interests, rather than its positions, and sharing them with the supplier. Establishing trust and good faith between parties will likely lead to more creative solutions.

To be a truly effective negotiator, managers must also identify as many alternatives as possible. Not only will that help managers better understand the market, but it also will determine what is a fair price. Once that rate is established, the manager then can explore all of the options for getting the best value possible. For example, the supplier may agree to a volume discount if the manager introduces him or her to another potential client.

The key to negotiating is to be candid and creative rather than to work within conventional confines.

For complete text, see page 28.

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KM Today

T+D recently talked about the state of knowledge management with Laurence Prusak, an acknowledged KM pioneer and author of numerous books on the subject.

After defining the term, Prusak said that since the 1990s, he has seen indications that KM is becoming a strategic business tool. References are found in all of strategic management literature—from basic texts to advanced articles. He also said the KM movement is a reaction against the technology hype of the last decade. KM is about how companies know what they know, how they know new things, and what can be done to evaluate and transfer knowledge.

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Measuring Know-How

Alastair Rylatt

In the current knowledge economy, people must be seen as assets who can profoundly affect market appeal, reputation, and performance. How well businesses evaluate and then improve their repository of know-how greatly influences how successful they are.

When it comes to measuring know-how, no one approach can meet all purposes. But these are several commonly explored areas of intangible value:

Customer capital. This measure evaluates customer interactions. It includes contracts, average response rates, customer satisfaction, repeat orders, and service awards.

Human capital. A measure of the current know-how of people under an organization's control, this area takes into account such factors as employee satisfaction, expert turnover, level and type of education, and number of employees.

Intellectual capital. This area constitutes listings and perceived values of trade markets, secrets, patents, and branding.

Relationship capital. Important strategic alliances and collaborative relationships such as cross-functional teamwork constitute relationship wealth.

Systems performance. This area explores how systems benefit or generate improved know-how.

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Demystifying Performance: Getting Started

Dennis L. Gay and Thomas J. LaBonte

In their May article, "Demystifying Performance: A Roadmap," Gay and LaBonte talked about human performance improvement and adding new value in improved business results. This follow-up spells out how to build confidence and credibility.

One way to build confidence as a performance consultant is to focus on learning enough about the business to have a stake in its current and future success. Another is to develop performance consulting competencies.

Choosing the right client may be the single most important success criteria. The client is the ultimate decision maker with accountability for a performance problem. Unfortunately, middle managers may lack the decision-making ability required to help a new performance consultant be successful. Keep the middle manager as a member of the team, but do everything in your power to get the business owner as actively involved as the real client.

Once you've identified the right client, it's critical to align the right project. Look for a performance problem that will allow you to start small. Spending some time evaluating your prospective client's business and financial data will help you find a ripe target to bring to attention.

Performance improvement isn't mysterious; it's about preparation and the courage to get started.

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E-Learning, the Lucent Way

Martha Gold

The fourth in a five-part series of case studies on enterprise-wide e-learning, this article describes how Lucent Technologies devoted significant resources to integrate its e-learning enterprise.

Lucent extends its product training to customers and business partners. In addition, users register and pay for classes and track their progress at the Website. The company is now working on making discrete tasks appear to happen in one spot, although the tasks will actually be conducted within the different systems.

Lucent purchased its LMS three years ago after acquiring a number of companies. Each company came with its own training platform. The challenge was to consolidate more than a dozen different systems into a single system and standardize and streamline the support functions. The conversion required a culture change, and a switch in technology and tools.

With the uniform LMS, Lucent is able to purchase more off-the-shelf content and grow its course selection, while spending little time customizing courses. In the process of making information more readily available, Lucent is changing its authoring platform to one that breaks down information into smaller, reusable chunks. That strategy gives more immediate access to needed information and more unstructured learning alternatives.

For complete text, see page 46.

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