

MAILBOX

Karl Stays on the Island I read with interest [Karl Albrecht's] article "Information Survival Skills" (February). The comments hit the target well, especially assumption 3: People will have to learn a completely new way of thinking. Too many training programs have been designed and delivered without any thought to the learning skills and paradigms of the learners. Even self-instructional programs have low success when presented to people who are accustomed to having someone lecture at them and aren't willing to try to get it on their own.

By the way—and this may or may not be an electronic information-age skill—*T+D* needs to look at the galleys better before printing. I call your attention to the strange line break in the first sentence under "intellectual courage."

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Editor's note: Galleys have gone the way of the dinosaurs, Sheldon, but we sure did miss that line break.

More Kudos for Karl Albrecht's article in [February's] *T+D* was brilliant! When I read, I pull out my yellow highlighter to focus on great points. By the time I'd finished reading his arti-

cle, the whole thing was highlighted. I felt like [Albrecht] had been reading my diary! I agree with just about everything he said, and I'm sure glad he had the courage to say it!

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Tools, Training, Tech

I read with interest your *t+d* online [column] regarding training room accommodations. When we are discussing the hows, means, whys, and wherefores of using technology to enhance the learning experience, I observe that it's very easy for all of us to occasionally lose sight of fundamental principles.

So that I don't get lost in complexity, I remind myself of the following every day: My goal as a trainer is to create for my students a short-term memory experience and then transform that into a long-term memory retrievable skill set that becomes integrated into the learner's workday lifestyle. When a [problem] arises in the course of his or her work, more tools are available in the student's skill set repertoire, enabling either a solution where one couldn't have existed before or a solution created with greater efficiency, greater elegance—or perhaps both.

I empathize with the

many trainers and educators worldwide who are doing their best to stay current with the avalanche of changes occurring in the training community, and attempting to make valiant efforts at integrating at least some of those changes into their own programs while not losing sight of their prime directives. I'm often faced with training future shock in attempting to reconcile my gut and [our] technological society's siren song.

My point is that the various tools that technology provides us are merely temporary compromises on the road to a direct learning experience—that ephemeral Utopian ideal whereby information is communicated effortlessly to a learner, the learner gets it, and he or she proceeds to use the new information immediately.

The confidence I feel in a one-on-one dynamic using a computer, a big sheet of paper, markers, and a ginseng-induced energy level occasionally needs reinforcement when expanded into a classroom dynamic, so I make use of the assistance of LCD projectors, whiteboards, slide shows with animation and sound, props, surrealistic humor, and anything else I can get my hands on in an attempt to approach the direct learning ideal.

My fantasy is this: When discussing databases

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with a learner, I wave my hand and several tables appear in the air next to me, linked with a variety of relationships, moving and floating in holographic splendor.

I introduce the topic of normalization, splitting and recombining the tables in the air to demonstrate each form. The topic shifts to formulas. I wave my hand again and display a number of reports using formulas.

There's puzzlement on the learner's part, so I dissolve the image and cause an Excel spreadsheet to appear, discussing formulas from a different perspective. Each image is vivid and precise, tailored in a millisecond to the learner's need of the moment. Observing that the learner's attention is waning, I introduce an image of Spiderman, who uses his Web-making device to grab the spreadsheet and tables, hurling them offstage.

Such a tool would need to be completely intuitive and integrative; as seamless as my words, as startling as my body language, and as subtly Pavlovian as deemed necessary by my need of the moment. Until

such tools become available, interim compromises should be examined for what they truly are—tools that may work for me and not for you while we all seek the direct learning epiphany.

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Corrections

February's In Gear tool *Decision Style Profile* costs US\$24.95 per profile; discounts start at 50 units. To order, contact Discovery Learning at 336.272.9530; www.discoverylearning.net.

The table in "E-Learning Weathers a Bear Market" (Barron, March) referred to venture capital investments in education. Its numbers are in millions of U.S. dollars and should have been credited to Eduventures.com.

Gerry Miles, a co-author of "Multi-Level Visioning" (March) has a new email address. He can now be reached at g.miles@totalise.co.uk.

NOTICE!

**T+D magazine's USPS number is 636-800.
T+D's new ISSN number is pending.**

IN REMEMBRANCE

**Ron Seal, Production Manager
January 9, 1942 – March 22, 2001**

Ron Seal's colleagues and friends in Creative Services, the Magazine Group, Publications, and all across ASTD join in honoring him here for his professionalism, positive attitude, and puckish sense of humor. He will be sorely missed by all. Here are a few words from some people who worked with Ron closely and knew him well:

Ron knew more about the printing industry than many printers. His work in the field extended from the days of handset type to the all-digital era. He guided *T+D* through several transitions, and nothing stumped him. He coached us on paper futures, split fountains, drop-shipping, and countless other arcana of the magazine business. He could bid a job faster than a speeding bullet, and then tell you how to save money on it. Most of all, he was a safety net between editorial and the quicksand of the modern printing industry.

Patricia Galagan, Editor-in-Chief

Ron helped me keep the work of producing *T+D* on track by being an ally, a mentor, and a friend. Countless times, he was there to tell me to stop taking things so seriously; then in the next sentence, he'd come up with a solution to whatever production, scheduling, or printing dilemma we were facing. Thanks to Ron, I never had to worry about too much, and I don't believe I ever had a conversation with him that didn't end on an upbeat note. I'll miss that.

Liz Jones, Art Director

Ron indelibly and inextricably supplied his special talents, enthusiasm, and respected expertise on *T+D* and countless other print resources for ASTD. He provided for me an example of a true professional, applied with a dauntless work ethic and good, old-fashioned integrity and common sense. Moreover, Ron became someone I sought out and depended on not only for print requests and guidance, but also in matters more personal. I came to rely on his special brand of droll humor, sympathetic ear, and no-nonsense counsel. He was quick with a compliment for a job well done and good enough to point out mistakes with his "everyone makes a mistake" shrug. Ron was a special friend I will miss very much.

Christopher Palazzo, Advertising Coordinator