

page 26

Engaging Generation Y

As companies strive to maximize talent, many stumble when it comes to younger workers. They're, like, different. So how do you engage millennials and develop their special talents? We asked Marcus Buckingham, author and authority on discovering and maximizing your strengths.

"There's no question that one of the challenges today is how to engage Generation Y, the millennial generation. They are manifestly different from Generation X, my generation. They're much more optimistic and entrepreneurial, and they're much more tech savvy. We grew up believing that nothing was permanent. We grew up with marriages that ended in divorce," Buckingham explains.

"Generation Ys got prizes for graduating from first grade, for coming in eighth in a race, or just for just showing up. They are the most rewarded, recognized, and praised generation in living memory. So they walk into the workplace feeling massively entitled. After six weeks on the job, they expect a promotion."

According to Buckingham, Generation Y's needs can benefit today's organizations.

"I think their demands and sense of entitlement mesh perfectly with the needs that companies have for employees who are creative, innovative, resourceful, resilient, persistent, and engaged," he says.

"So it is entirely in the company's best interest to say to a person, 'I can teach you how to find ways to fill your week with activities that make you feel strong.'"

For complete text, see page 26.

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page 32

Industry Experts Discuss Education, Profession, and Future

Paula Ketter

Not long ago, the role of a trainer was all about instructional design, high-quality classroom training, and providing whatever a business asked for and then proving worth through success or failure. But according to four top workplace learning and performance professionals, the evolution has brought value to this profession and changed the way trainers are viewed in the workplace.

Four experts—Darren Bartlett, business banking learning director for Barclays Bank, United Kingdom; Gloria Bentley, director of training and development for Asset Management Advisors; Steve Leech, chief learning officer of HR operations and learning development for Gap; and Donna McNamara, vice president of global education and training for Colgate Palmolive—share their thoughts on education, the profession, and the future.

While all four professionals had slightly different views on the challenges facing the profession, all agreed that this industry has become more strategic, which requires excellent business savvy.

"One of the biggest challenges is being strategic and proactive from both cross-disciplinary and business perspectives," says McNamara. "Often, people in the field love their core discipline so much that they focus on the technical aspects of their job without sufficiently understanding the broader context."

The future for workplace learning and performance professionals will flourish if they proactively address the needs of an organization, according to Bartlett.

For complete text, see page 32.

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page 36

Virtual Reality in the OR

David Rath

The Stanford University Medical Media and Instructional Technology group believe web-based learning has the potential to improve leadership, cooperation, and communication skills that can be transferred from the virtual environment to the operating room. The web sessions could have participants working together from London, California, and Ottawa, according to David Gaba, a professor of anesthesiology and associate dean for immersive and simulation-based learning at Stanford.

"These virtual worlds will become one of several modalities in refresher training that you will cycle through during the course of your medical career," he says. Another potential use for virtual reality simulation will be for surgeons to practice operations they are about to perform using data simulating the exact patients they are scheduled to operate on. "That will be done on unusually complex cases such as separating conjoined twins," Gaba says.

With patient safety an increasing concern and with more sophisticated simulations available, a growing number of educators are pushing for simulations to play a larger role in medical and nursing school curricula and internship training.

Simulations can teach minimally invasive procedures and assess competency before physicians-in-training enter an operating room. This represents a paradigm shift in medical training, argues Dr. Christopher Cates, director of vascular intervention at Emory University in Atlanta. "Until they perform well enough on a simulation in a virtual world, they aren't going into the operating room."

For complete text, see page 36.

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page 41

Dental Service Adopts Coach Wooden's Philosophies

Dan Sussman

A basketball team's success depends upon the character of its players and their ability to work well as a team, and a dental practice's ability to flourish rests on the character and integrity of its employees and their ability to work well together to serve their patients. To drive home that point, Pacific Dental Services offers to its 1,700 employees an organizational and personal development course based on the teachings of legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden.

The relationship between PDS and The John R. Wooden Course proves how two startup companies with similar, time-tested values at their core, can serve each other's needs.

Former UCLA Coach John Wooden's training course is based on the coach's belief in what Lynn Guerin, a corporate training executive, refers to as "timeless wisdom." Using basketball as a metaphor, the course is based on Wooden's "Pyramid of Success," which he formalized in 1948 and which stresses behaviors such as industriousness, enthusiasm, team spirit, self-control, friendliness, poise, and confidence.

In keeping with Wooden's teachings on the value of coaching, PDS evaluates potential affiliates' ability to be coaches and their openness to coaching from others in selecting affiliate practices.

In addition, Pacific Dental University utilizes peer teaching, in which employees who are advanced in the curriculum teach individuals with less experience.

For complete text, see page 41.

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page 47

Grooming Leaders for Growth

Rita Smith and Beth Bledsoe

It may be one of the most difficult questions that senior learning officers are grappling with today: How do we build a strong worldwide management team and our global business at the same time?

That question was on the minds of leaders and corporate educators at Ingersoll Rand.

After selling heavy machinery equipment for more than 100 years, Ingersoll Rand transformed into a highly diversified company with \$10.5 billion in annual revenues. During the past five years, the company has replaced, through acquisitions and divestitures, businesses comprising roughly \$3 billion—one third of its annual revenues. Today, the company is in dozens of new markets, producing such products as biometric handreaders for airport security and refrigeration units for perishable food shipping.

Finding and retaining people with the appropriate skills, aptitude, and perspective to assume positions of leadership is a challenge for every organization. But for one undergoing radical change and growth, grooming the right people to be the next generation of leaders can be a truly daunting task.

During the height of Ingersoll Rand's business growth, instructors, leaders of the company's corporate education program, and senior management examined how to tailor the MBA program to cultivate the company's management bench.

Given its ambitious goals to revamp and reinvigorate its MBA program, the management team realized that the company needed the support of a reputable, collaborative partner to create a program geared to its corporate education needs. After considerable research, Ingersoll Rand joined forces with Indiana University's Kelley School of Business.

For complete text, see page 47.

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page 51

Make Innovation Work in your Workplace

Jeff DeGraff and Pete Bacevice

The aura of innovation is everywhere. As you sip your coffee at Starbucks, drive your hybrid Toyota, or search with Google at your office, it becomes clear that innovation is an intersection of objects, styles, techniques, and knowledge that makes something new or improved.

How do you teach employees to see, think, learn, and act in an entirely new way? How do you convince people to work together across departments and divisions?

There are seven principles for leading innovation that Fortune 500 companies have successfully used for years, and they should be part of your corporation's training and development programs.

In the end, an innovative company is a learning organization. Leaving room to make unexpected discoveries that can lead to innovation is the same skill set needed for learning. Innovation and learning require the ability to make sense of ambiguity. Sometimes your senses will lead you directly to a breakthrough innovation. Many times your senses will simply guide you in your everyday routines, and it is those everyday routines that might house the next important innovation.

Leading innovation is not about one person or one project in a company. It is the fruits of collective learning by groups of individuals who are aware of their surroundings to the point at which they are able to recognize opportunities.

For complete text, see page 51.

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