

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

Delta Force
Patricia A. Galagan

When the 2001 economic downturn caused Cisco's earnings to stumble, the Delta Force—CEO John Chambers, the IT unit, and the Internet Learning Solutions Group—used the opportunity to beam a steady stream of information and learning opportunities to staff and partners around the globe.

Within weeks of the company's slump, the ILSG and its IT partners were producing videos, covering live events over Cisco TV, and helping SMEs create more than 25,000 reusable learning objects. Each week, Chambers made a video to update employees on the situation. That was the turning point: For the rest of fiscal year 2001, use of e-learning tools accelerated 700 percent. That increase helped e-learning survive two rounds of budget cuts and spared the Cisco Media Network, a studio that transmits 50 broadcasts each month.

Thanks to its infrastructure, IP technology, and e-learning mandate, Cisco is a natural leader in the industry. A fact that's made evident by the nearly 60 companies a month that visit Cisco to find out how it "does" e-learning.

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Before You Buy...
Paul Sparta

Due to the increase of e-learning as a tool for delivering training, training executives face difficult decisions: What e-learning system should the organization buy? What content should run on it? Which employees should use it for training?

The success of your online learning effort is embedded in its implementation plan. That plan should rise from a thorough understanding of your company's needs. For that reason, consider the entire enterprise when making e-learning decisions.

Too often, that cover-the-enterprise principle isn't applied to training or learning and knowledge management. Organizations spend a considerable sum of money on a centralized e-learning system that serves only 20 percent of their learning needs.

Here's a holistic approach that will benefit all departments:

- Presume from the outset that your LMS is part of a continuum of other large-scale information systems.
- Determine the requirements and goals for the entire organization.
- Work to get buy-in from every business unit.
- Ask IT leaders for assistance in incorporating features that meet the needs of every department.

At the end of that process, you'll have a plan for a robust, enterprise-wide solution—not just a simple e-learning delivery system.

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A Cool Learning Space
Haidee E. Allerton

Susan Sarfati, president and CEO of the Center for Association Leadership, describes the center as more than a cool gathering place: "Our desire is to create a diverse community of professionals who work in associations—and those interested in learning about working with associations—so they can share their knowledge and experiences." But man, is it ever a really *cool* space!

As part university, part think tank, the complex is a place for people to explore new ideas and discover what's next in the association profession. And who wouldn't be inspired here? A wave table swoops around the boardroom (a visual representation that there are no power seats); almost-translucent surfaces and doors create an open and flowing environment; big armchairs on wheels can be moved around for impromptu conversation pits; and computer kiosks dot the landscape.

The design exemplifies and honors the association community's desire for interactive, high-impact learning experiences, retrieval and dissemination of knowledge, and nurturing of association innovators and leaders.

Outside organizations can rent the facilities at the "student union," as employees fondly refer to the complex, or participate in educational programs online and at other locations.

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Shareholder Value: Is There Common Ground?

Gary L. May and Bill Kahnweiler

The 64 invited attendees of the ASTD/AHRD Future Search Conference in June 2001 got together to identify the common values and principles that will help shape the profession's agenda for the future. But surprisingly absent from that list of Common Ground Statements was the fact that businesses care most about how learning supports and drives business results.

In the 1990s, the mantra was to increase shareholder value—increase stock price—yet that's a questionable philosophy given the recent events surrounding Enron. According to Peter Drucker, the shareholder value theorem isn't tenable for the long run.

So, the question becomes What's a training and development professional to do? First, take responsibility. Don't dwell on not getting respect or not having resources. Instead, close the communication gap between you and your CEO by translating your principles into language and actions that relate to your CEO's concerns. Next, do your homework and identify the proven practices that will produce the desired results.

Those steps will help you not only fully understand CEOs' priorities, but also to become equal partners at the board level.

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