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The Key

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Letter from the Editor

In last month's issue of The Key, I suggested that technology is making it increasingly easy to seek and access information. I further suggested that training's role is NOT primarily providing that access, but in developing a higher order of capability in employees.

A number of folks asked for permission to reprint that letter. While I didn't ask why, I'm guessing that they're using it to define their roles - or possibly justifying their roles as trainers in this new world of information and expertise access.

Rather than lamenting, "What do we do with all this social learning stuff," let me suggest a more productive perspective, that of a performance consultant. We help people perform more effectively and efficiently. We provide tools, tactics, and techniques to help them do that. Sometimes those solutions include classroom training, sometimes a job aid, sometimes a memo from management, sometimes nothing. If you frame your role as performance consultant with constituents rather than trainer with students, many of these technological discussions disappear.

If your constituents need access to information, suggest it or build it. If your constituents need the confidence that comes through practice and feedback, provide it (or teach their managers how to provide it.) If your constituents could benefit from a set of best practices or from a job aid or from clearer expectations or from ... it's your job to figure out how best to give it to them.

As a performance consultant, your role is clear. While the world of available tools always changes, your job doesn't - you are to help others increase their performance. Even if you work within a company and your role is narrowly defined, adopt the perspective of a performance consultant and address their needs.

So, to repeat myself from last month:

Continue embracing and supporting technology as the bridge between experts and those needing the expertise. Connect and be connected!

At the same time, recognize that technology is the means for connecting. And it's best used to address immediate - and primarily knowledge-based - needs; a person needs an answer to a question now.

However, seeking or obtaining information is - I humbly suggest - NOT training. Training should be about answering questions that aren't asked. Training should be about introducing and honing skills that provide the platform for applying all that knowledge.

When your solution to a performance problem DOES include training, make sure that the training you design and develop does what it's supposed to - help people do their work better, faster, more accurately, more confidently, with fewer errors, greater margins, and higher percentages of success.

Terence R. Traut
President



Training as a Solution to a Performance Problem

What's Training Good For?

Training is useful for many things including:

- Getting out of work.
- Increasing your potential worth on your next job.
- Catching up on rest.
- Getting some free donuts and maybe a pen and notebook.
- Meeting others who are getting out of work while they increase their net worth for their next job while they rest up after eating the free donuts and doodle with their free pen and notebook.



Much of today's corporate training continues to satisfy the demanding needs outlined above.

Unfortunately, as trainers, we tend to create environments that are safe, relaxed, and a respite from "the real world" so it's not surprising that we've created this bloated, self-absorbed monster.

What *SHOULD* be the Reason for Training?

If we strip away training entirely, we end up with its essence: job performance. In business, the goal is to: 1) produce more things faster, less expensively, and of a higher quality than our competition; 2) sell more of them to more customers at as high a price as the market can bear; and 3) enjoy ourselves enough to come back to do it again tomorrow. Training's goal is to support that effort in any way it can. We can help people:

- Produce more things.
- Produce things less expensively.
- Produce things of higher quality.
- Sell more things.
- Sell to more people.
- Sell at a higher price.
- Satisfy our current customers so they buy more from us.
- Enjoy their work so they come back tomorrow.



Of course, there are support functions in any organization; through training we may be able to:

- Help them lead (so others can produce more or sell more or enjoy their work so they will return tomorrow).
- Help them project manage (so others can produce more of higher quality).
- Help them market better (so others can sell more to more people at a higher price).

And sometimes we need to train people in related topics; we may need to:

- Help them follow safety practices (so they can produce more without having to stop and go to the hospital).
- Help them not sexually harass fellow employees (which would cause those employees to produce less or produce things of lower quality).

Do No Harm

Let me explain what I mean when I say, "Do no harm."

In a previous life as instructional design manager at a large high-tech manufacturer of computer equipment, the company suffered a series of layoffs and reorganizations, each with its accompanying wave of mandatory training. With each subsequent layoff and round of training, I got closer and closer to the field (there were increasingly fewer of us at corporate!) and could see that the training that seemed so right at corporate headquarters was so wrong in the field.

Issues that impacted us at headquarters - organizational structures, titles, responsibilities, span of control, vision, mission statements - mattered not one iota to the sales rep in the field. Training that once seemed mission critical was now distracting and negatively impacting sales - what little sales we were mustering up at the time.

The solution? Training's answer to the problem? STOP TRAINING!!! When trainers don't know what the on-the-job performance problem is, at least they should STOP TRAINING until they figure it out. I think the best thing I did for the company during my last six months at the sales training design helm was to stay the hell out of the way of people doing the work!



All trainers should memorize and religiously practice the medical practitioner's Hippocratic oath: "I will prescribe regimen for the good of my patients according to my ability and my judgment and never do harm to anyone."

Performance consulting is about accurate diagnosis and useful prescription. Done correctly and repeatedly, performance consulting ensures that the "prescribed regimen" will - if followed by the patient - result in increased performance - more stuff of higher quality produced with more efficiency and sold more to more people at more profit.

Moreover, performance consulting will ensure that you "never do harm to anyone."

For more information on performance consulting and doing no harm, get a copy of Entelechy's *Approach to Performance* eGuide available now at our website: www.unlockit.com under Training Tools -> eGuides.

Training versus Performance Consulting

The differences between training and performance consulting are subtle but critical. Whereas a trainer focuses on skills and knowledge, design, and delivery, the performance consultant focuses on business and on-the-job performance. The performance consultant is "in the trenches" figuring things out.

| | <i>Training</i> | <i>Performance Consulting</i> |
|-------------------|--|--|
| <i>Focus</i> | Skills and knowledge, design, delivery | Job performance and associated needs |
| <i>Role</i> | Provide superior training | Improve job performance |
| <i>Challenges</i> | Filling classes; making training enjoyable | Keeping people on the job; making training effective |

The trainer's role is to provide the best training possible: interactive, engaging training, complete with assessments, engaging presentations and graphics, and a training environment conducive to learning. The performance consultant sees his or her job as improving on-the-job performance by whatever means possible - usually the cheaper and quicker, the better!

The trainer is concerned about filling classes (butts in seats), scheduling, and making sure that the training is enjoyable so participants encourage other participants to attend. The performance consultant is worried about the effect that the new computer application is going to have on order processing, reducing turnover, shortening the ramp-up time for new hires, and taking the employee away from the job for any reason - including training.

The performance consultant is NOT simply worried about a bigger picture; the performance consultant is worried about the ONLY picture - performance and how to increase it. Training becomes one of the many tools the performance consultant uses to increase performance. Other tools include mentoring, coaching, quick-and-dirty job aids, an email clarifying the expectations, a discussion with the manager about the possibility of rearranging the seating to make it easier for employees to share information, a contest to refocus effort and have some fun.

There's a saying: "To the hammer, everything looks like a nail." To a trainer, every problem looks like an opportunity for training. To a performance consultant, training is only one of many tools available to address performance problems.

There are many benefits associated with taking a business-based performance consulting approach to performance improvement.

Often, the direct result is that you - and the organization - will see quicker results. Maybe what's needed is NOT training, but a simple email clarifying what's expected of everyone. Putting out an email is obviously much quicker and simpler than developing and scheduling training.

Second, the results may be more permanent. Performance consultants fix problems - they do not focus blindly on symptoms. Addressing a symptom usually creates additional performance problems.

Third, you will begin to be perceived as more than a



trainer; you will be perceived as a business partner. You will be viewed as an expert in human performance - how to get the most from people. And because of your partnering and consulting skill, you will find yourself increasingly being called on for your expertise and opinions. Your contribution to business improvement is by helping employees perform to the company's expectations and to their fullest potential.

That's not to say that performance consulting is without challenges. One of the seminal books on the subject is Performance Consulting: Moving Beyond Training, by Dana Gaines Robinson and James C. Robinson. They begin their book by acknowledging the significant challenges trainers have to overcome in order to become performance consultants, the first of which is perception:

Organizations do not ask us to deliver what they need; they ask us to deliver what they believe we can provide.... And what we are asked to provide - training - is often ineffective, unnecessary, and expensive. Occasionally it is even harmful. We do just what we are asked to do - deliver training. We do not do what we are not asked to do - improve human performance in the workplace.

Changing your business card to read Performance Consultant is not enough; you must broaden your own knowledge of business and performance to gain the credibility you will need as performance consultant. And get ready to get dirty; messing around with the many variables impacting performance is messy and extremely rewarding!

And Now, Something Completely Different

Cookie Blues

I love a good cookie and good blues.... <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3o2LszirHnA>

Do They Know It's Christmas?



There's something about the holidays that brings hope. This song from a collection of artists from BandAid 1984 rocks!
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jEnTSQStGE&feature=fvw>

Happy Holidays from all of us at Entelechy!!

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