TRAINING TODAY

CHICAGOLAND CHAPTER ASTD WORKPLACE LEARNING & PERFORMANCE

MARCH 2011

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Letter From the Editor

Can it be March already? The long, gray and bitterly cold beginning of the year is finally giving way to brighter days. The recent "warm" weather is melting the mounds of snow that have been a fairly constant fixture of our landscape this year. Spring is on its way — as is change.

President-Elect, Trish Uhl Announces new CCASTD theme: "Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things." Our 2011 Chapter theme has taken root already. In this issue you'll find many ways to recognize moments of brilliance and lots of ideas for going beyond the ordinary. One excellent way to do extraordinary things is to get involved - in the Chapter or in our community. Read about some of the differences CCASTD volunteers have made in the community, and learn how you can get involved.

What about you? Have you experienced someone doing something extraordinary in our field? Maybe you've seen a co-worker put together a "dream team" to solve a learning and development problem? Perhaps you've witnessed the impact of a volunteer or the dedication of a colleague who has made a difference in his or her world. Send us your experience with the extraordinary! We'd love to share it with our members as a way to inspire others to do extraordinary things.

Got content? Want to get published? The upcoming issues of *Training Today* will focus on topics that include Leadership and Coaching, and Performance Improvement. Do you have existing articles or expertise in these areas? Consider sharing your insight. If you're not a writer, do you have photos or cartoons or great activities to share? Send us your content…you just may see your name in print.

Have ideas? Share your thoughts, ideas, stories, content, or desire to get involved. I can be reached at: lmswedb@aol.com. If you're not sure who to contact, the general Chapter email is: Info@CCASTD.org. Go ahead — get involved — don't be shy. I double-dog dare you.

Louann
Louann Swedberg

TRAINING TODAY

MARCH 2011

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Looking Back — and Forward

by Deb Pastors, 2010 President, CCASTD

In 2010, I selected Creating Our Future as CCASTD's theme for the year. As I look back on the year, I've reflected on why I chose that theme

Despite never-ending change in our organizations, a deep recession, and other events that caused many to consider the future apprehensively, I believed that WLP professionals were entering an era that would provide them with numerous opportunities to make a profound difference in organizations. I also believed that if we didn't rise to the occasion and define what that era looked like for ourselves, others would do it for us.

I also believed that part of that future was looking *beyond* the borders of our own field. As I wrote last year, "we limit our effectiveness in our organizations if we limit ourselves to learning *only* about what's going on in the WLP field. There is much we can learn from economics, science, technology, politics, etc, that is applicable to our organizations. I believe it's vitally important for us to be looking *outside* our field as well as within for ways to truly help our organizations."

I still believe now what I believed a year ago about the future for WLP professionals. Perhaps I believe it today even more strongly. In fact, to the second point, just this morning I read a special report from a recent edition of *The Economist*[*]. In the report, there was a discussion about the best universities in the world now having a global presence. David Elwood, dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government said – "All the interesting problems cross boundaries. Some straddle borders. Some straddle disciplines. Some require cooperation between business, government, academia, and non-profit groups. So you have to train people to cross boundaries." Elwood goes on to say that leaders need "an incredible curiosity" and a capacity to listen.

Last year was the first year of a new three-year strategy for CCASTD. As part of that strategy, we have pledged to help our members develop their competence as members in a true profession geared toward globalization, and the transformation, innovation, and strategic enablement of individuals and organizations. *I* continue to believe that, as learning leaders, we are in a unique position to have a real impact on the lives of others – not only in our organizations, but perhaps across the globe.

Pollyannaish? I don't think so. WLP professionals get to see organizations as few others do. Many of us have that "incredible curiosity" and a desire to be change agents for a better tomorrow. If we commit to developing our skills, and furthering our *own* learning, both inside and outside of the learning profession, we truly can bring about transformation – for ourselves, in our organizations, and in our communities. Perhaps for an even larger community.

Bringing about transformation is not for the faint of heart. Make no mistake – if we wish to create the future we want, we must work hard. The theme that Trish Uhl, this year's CCASTD president, has set for 2011 – *Challenging Ordinary People to do Extraordinary Things* – is a reminder to all of us that we *can* do extraordinary things if we work hard, work smart, and work together. We *can* create the future we want to see and do extraordinary things. I invite you to find new ways to learn, to share what you know, and to get involved. I invite you to contribute to the future we want to create – and to be extraordinary!

1. [*] The few – A special report on global leaders, *The Economist*, 22 January 11, pp 16-17

Deb Pastors is immediate past president of CCASTD. She can be reached at debpastors@att.net.

The Value of Volunteering

by Robert Addis

"As far as your personal requirements are concerned, the ideal is to have fewer involvements, fewer obligations, and fewer affairs, business or whatever. However, so far as the interest of the larger community is concerned, you must have as many involvements as possible and as many activities as possible." — *Dalai Lama*

As a profession, we constantly strive to prove the worth of the profession and of our solutions, of our roles, and of our organization (ASTD/CCASTD). The need to validate does not come from a cynical place, but a pragmatic one. Value in volunteering, in community service, is difficult to assign worth. The difficulty lies with the word volunteer itself. Volunteer has a formal definition, but it really means a variety of things to a variety of people. That variety also lends itself to the complexity of the people who volunteer. What connects one person to another? What connects us to a cause? What encourages the giving? The list is long: helping, service, empathy, compassion, connection, support, caring; all of these are great reasons to volunteer. Do we need value beyond these and the many other cerebral, social or even soulful reasons one can find to volunteer. Yes, we do.

We don't need a reason to volunteer. The mistake though is the idea that volunteering is altruistic. It should not be; it cannot be. If volunteering is to be affective and sustainable, there has to be an equal exchange that supports the efforts and connections of both parties. CCASTD and our community relations effort have, for three years, set out to broaden the definition of volunteering. We set out to create an effort that improves the life of both the giver and the receiver. We have amazing volunteers. As *Training Today* creates a reference point on community relations and our groups "many involvements," it seems like an opportune time to substantiate the value in serving the greater community. We find value in our community relations effort in four major areas: Professional Development, Expansion of our Profession, Networking, and Personal Enrichment.

Professional Development

In our three years, we have supported community not-for-profits through strategic planning, assessment and analysis of needs, supporting the learning function, evaluating results, designing curriculum, facilitating classes, board development, management skills, communication, and performance improvement. All of these efforts afforded value to our volunteers. You can correlate each of these "wins" for the not-for-profit with the "Core Competencies" and/or "Areas of Expertise" identified in our own competency model. For the volunteers who have taken on projects, they have the opportunity to develop in these areas, which results in a greater mastery of our profession.

The great advantages to this development opportunity are the challenges that can be present when working in a different environment such as a prison, a hospital, or a social service agency. The needs and priorities are different, and the result is professional volunteers not only using their skills but adapting them. Call it social cognitive theory or social constructivism, this type of professional development is not merely using one's skills and knowledge. This is asking professionals to adapt their knowledge and skills to a new reality, to problems and concerns with different players and in extremely demanding situations. Although not monetary, value here lies in a learning experience that can profoundly propel a professional's evolution.

Expansion of Our Profession

Parallel to the skill development of our volunteers, we have witnessed an opportunity to expand our profession of workforce learning. Each time one professional volunteer supports the efforts of a non-profit, they demonstrate the power of our profession. They serve as an example of best practice and the affect of integrating the learning unit in organizational matters. As an example: analysis, the process involved in creating an effective performance solution is often unfamiliar to those with whom we are partnering. They realize the need for training and they ask for help. In these situations we have the opportunity to develop other professionals in the practice of training and development.

Our efforts with Little City Foundation and The United Way of Chicago have shown two levels of impact. The latter gave us an HR Director who signed up for the WLPI series after her work with our volunteers. She paid with her own money because, "There is a lot to learn and I need to know it." One could attribute a monetary value to this, but that would squelch the greater impact. The value came not in the form of attendance to a program, but in the acknowledgement of our profession. The value came from someone asking new questions and seeking out their own development in our field.

Continued on next page

The former, Little City Foundation, resulted in an entire executive staff embracing the assessment of our volunteers. Originally asked to produce a new hire training guide, our volunteers were able to illuminate great needs through their assessments. It was not enough to merely create a guide, and as they collaborated both parties identified larger challenges that needed to be addressed in order to improve the performance of their new staff. Management allowed the volunteers to work with their youth, interview their employees, and for several months the volunteers became "part of the staff." The end result has value and it equates to two strangers influencing organization leaders and connecting them to our profession. Our volunteers illuminated the power of our processes and standards and ultimately to their value.

Robert Addis recently assumed the position of Instructional Design Manager for the Institute of Workforce Education at St. Augustine College. He has smoothly transitioned between serving as an internal and external consultant in both the for-profit and not-for-profit arena, adapting and developing skills in instructional design, coaching, e-learning, human performance, and adult learning. For three years has served on the board of the Chicago Chapter of ASTD, where he started an effort to connect professional volunteers to the performance needs of area not-for-profits. This work resulted in being selected to present at the ASTD Chapter Leaders Conference in 2010. He has also served on the planning committee for the Chicago E-learning and Technology Showcase. Contact Robert at mymail@robertaddis.net.

Robert is a past CCASTD Board Member and Director of Community Relations. He is the Manager of Instructional Design at Institute for Workforce Education,St. Augustine College, Chicago, IL. He holds a M.A. in Training and Development from Roosevelt University. You can follow Robert on Twitter: http://twitter.com/Robaway98.

Networking

Networking is a common but powerful result of volunteering. Unfortunately, networking also has become synonymous with 'job seeking'. We have all been there, used it, and been grateful. Volunteering is networking with a hostage, but engaged audience. Whether you are working with another learning professional, or not, you are connecting with someone who wants to hear what you have to say. They want to see what you can do. They will want to tell someone else when you have made a difference. It is networking on steroids.

We go to chapter meetings, presentation, and conferences; we collect a forest of business cards. We hope for a connection on a substantial level. How many times is success realized? Not as much as a connection made through a volunteering. When you volunteer you are working with leadership and other professionals who will remember not only you and your effort, but the connection to a cause, which can be substantially more powerful. Theodore Roosevelt said, "It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles…The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena…who spends himself in a worthy cause." Networking is about connection, and sharing in a cause — producing for a cause, is a stronger statement than a 30 second elevator speech and a 2 x 3.25 card. What is the value? Immeasurable - until you need to use it.

Personal Enrichment

Personal enrichment is a direct result of the three values discussed. Professional development, professional expansion, and networking each contribute to our enrichment. It also contributes, as the Dalai Lama states, "To the greater community." There is really only one way to demonstrate the value in this area, and that is to reach out to someone who has experienced that personal enrichment. **Vincent Tassone, an amazing volunteer and the 2010 recipient of the CCASTD Community Service Award**, assigns the following value to his experience.

> "Anyone who is looking for an enriching professional enhancement should consider volunteering with CCASTD. I have had the opportunity to consult with both the Little City Foundation and Changed Heart project over the past year. Each experience opened my eyes to a world outside the corporate domain. The participants I met had no pretences but instead were willing to share their stories as well as their hopes and dreams. In exchange for your service, they provided a level of enthusiasm, commitment and support that would be the envy of the corporate world. One word of warning is worth mentioning. Once you start, you will be hooked as a volunteer. So take from one who's been there; don't delay. You won't regret it."

Not a number, but a value all the same.

The true value for volunteering may actually not be realized as of this moment. Vincent speaks of an internal value; he speaks of "eyes to a world outside the corporate domain." How has the experience impacted his performance in the "corporate domain?" This is not a challenge to Vincent; it is a challenge to CCASTD Community Relations. We are not following our own process. We are missing out on what the ultimate value should be from our effort. We are missing the transfer of the development, the expansion, the network, the enrichment — the knowledge on the volunteer's performance of his/her job. We are missing the true value as defined by our own profession.

What is the expectation moving forward? This writer can only speak for himself. There is value in our effort; there are also challenges and struggles. We need more organizations to see the value of reaching out to our membership. We need to show the value to our members. We can continue to build a unique opportunity of knowledge sharing and development. Connecting other professionals so that their perspective can be broadened and they can appreciate the power of learning and development, connecting our members to causes that lift the human spirit, bolster our community, and enhance the personal experience, and finally, to find value in the sometimes intangible effort of service. We need to discover what other values we may be missing and find ways to quantify the results, both small and large and both internally and externally.

"Changed Heart" — A Volunteer Project

by Melissa Pagonis

What is a "returning citizen?" You may be more familiar with the less favorable terms, such as ex-felon or parolee. While the term "returning citizen" refers to the same population, it tends to take on a whole new meaning. To me, it speaks of someone looking to make a change, someone who wants to improve their character, expand their knowledge and skill set – someone who wants to progress and be better than they were before.

Now consider how that relates to the workplace learning and performance (WLP) profession. As professionals in the field, our goal is to help navigate change, encourage and support development, expand knowledge and skill sets, and to improve learning and performance. In many ways, WLP professionals are well prepared to meet the needs of returning citizens.

However, in our day-to-day jobs we've become conditioned to the regular routines of corporate culture. We understand the ins and outs of corporate politics, the demands of our stakeholders and the needs of our end users. But, what happens when our audience becomes men who just spent the last 10, 15, 20+ years in prison? Suddenly, the WLP professional is thrust into a whole new world of politics, demands and needs.

When I agreed to volunteer as the Resource and Project Manager for the "Changed Heart" project I found myself wondering, 'What do I know about being incarcerated? How can I relate to this audience? How can I bring anything meaningful to the table?' While it might seem relatively straight-forward to develop a one hour module on the topic of "Parenting," you must remember that this particular audience has been parenting from behind bars for the last two decades. Likewise, consider trying to develop a module on "Decision Making," except your audience hasn't used this skill in several years because, in prison, all decisions are made for you. Imagine how all of this changes the dynamics of how you design and develop each particular module.

I began, as any WLP professional would, with a needs assessment and audience analysis. I'll admit I wasn't sure what to expect as I walked into the men's weekly group meeting. What I found was something amazing and truly humbling. I was immediately welcomed into the group and encouraged to participate in the larger group discussion. A general feeling of appreciation and enthusiasm about the opportunity to create a special curriculum filled the room. They were excited and passionate about helping me to understand their needs. I'm not sure what these men did to earn their sentence and, quite frankly, I didn't want to know. I signed onto the project with a deep belief that people make mistakes and that, if your heart is truly changed, you deserve a second chance. My belief was further ingrained as I came to know and understand this unique group of individuals.

The "Changed Heart" curriculum was born from a simple activity and the ensuing discussion. Fellow Project Lead and friend, Renie McClay, led the activity called "Here is, There is," otherwise known to the WLP professional as a gap analysis. Below is a list of some of the men's responses:

Here is . . .	*There is . . .*
I have nothing.	*Standing taller, being a better communicator, being able to hold a conversation with anyone, peace in my life, built up confidence, being able to handle rejection, having a job.*
Who am I? Where am I going? How am I going to get there?	*Purpose and understanding*
Confusion and frustration	*Sense of freedom*
Misery and failure	*Success, happiness and joy*
I'm alone.	*I belong to a community.*

In the six months since my first meeting with the returning citizens, seven instructional designers (IDs) have joined the project and have developed six of 10 planned modules on topics ranging from handling grief and anger to financial literacy and time management.

Robert Addis, Co-Director of Community Relations, speaks of volunteering as "an equal exchange that supports the efforts and connections of both parties as "an effort that improves the life of both the giver and the receiver." I whole-heartedly believe in this statement, and can see how it applies to my experience.

Volunteering for the "Changed Heart" project has been truly rewarding for me in several different ways. I have not only improved skills and gained experience but I've also been intrinsically rewarded. In the end, it wasn't just about changing the hearts of returning citizens. It was about changing mine. As I learned about the needs of a different audience, I expanded my worldview. As I practiced my negotiation and consulting skills, I helped an underserved but deserving population. As I managed the project, I enabled a team of volunteers to most effectively provide their expertise. I'm proud of the modules my design team has created and I'm confident that we've delivered a product that has and will continue to add value to lives of returning citizens.

There are plenty of opportunities for you as a WLP professional to become involved in projects like "A Changed Heart". For more information, contact Melissa Pagonis at CCASTD.Community@gmail.com.

Melissa Pagonis has been a workplace learning and development professional for over eight years. She currently works as a Sr. Trainer and Instructional Designer for a small nonprofit in Glenview, IL. She is also involved in CCASTD as co-director of Community Relations and chair of the Dr. Deborah Colky Student Award Committee. She received her MA in Training and Development from Roosevelt University in 2008 and recently earned the CPLP credential. You can email Melissa at melissa.pagonis@gmail.com.

Have You Heard of the Dr. Deborah Colky Student Award?

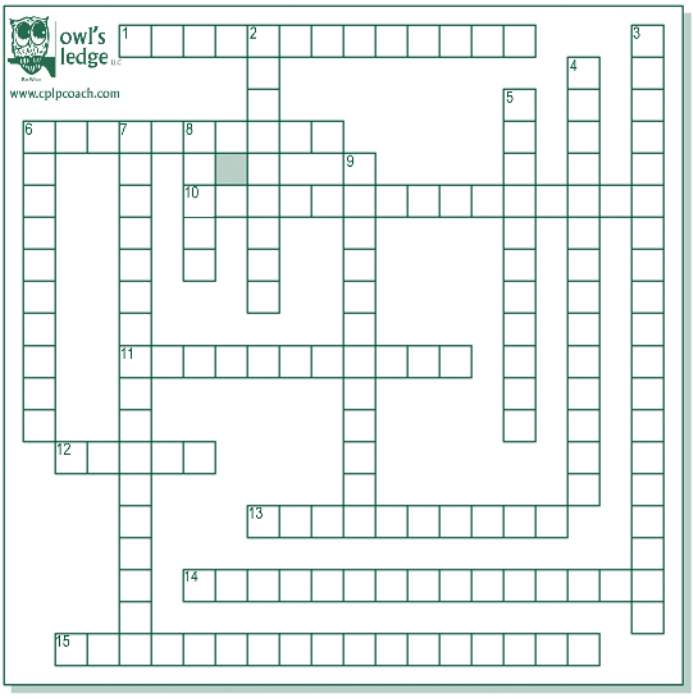
Dr. Colky served as a workplace learning and performance (WLP) professional for over 20 years as a consultant, business owner and Director of Roosevelt University's Masters Program in Training and Development. She believed in lifelong learning and was passionate about helping everyone achieve their full potential. Through her commitment, passion, sense of humor and energy she demonstrated a strong belief in the WLP profession as a way to enhance the workplace and the world in which we live. Every day, she instilled in her students the enthusiasm for learning and inspired them to put into action what she taught.

Dr. Colky passed away from a sudden illness in January of 2007. That year, the Chicagoland Chapter of The American Society for Training and Development (CCASTD) established the Dr. Deborah Colky Student Award to honor her life and to help a promising student who shares the same level of enthusiasm for the WLP profession.

If you are a current Chicagoland student who is committed to pursuing a degree and career focused in the WLP profession, CCASTD invites you to apply for the Dr. Deborah Colky Student Award. A one-time stipend will be given to the applicant chosen by the CCASTD Award Selection Committee, in addition to a commemorative award plaque and attendance as a guest of honor at the CCASTD's Annual Holiday Dinner in December 2011.

For more information, please email Melissa Pagonis at ccastd.community@gmail.com.

Owl's Ledge Crossword Puzzle:
ASTD WLP Competency Model



CLUES

Across

1. (2 words) Developer of the theory of multiple intelligences.
6. (2 words) Work or deliverables that are added to a project but were neither part of the project requirements nor added through a formal requirement change.
10. (2 words) Communication technique that focuses entirely on what the other person is saying and confirms understanding of both the content of the message and the emotions. A coach or trainer accepts what is being said without making value judgments, clarifies ideas and feelings being expressed and reflects these back to participants.
11. The activity of collecting data about the success of a learning program
12. A scientific theory stating that small movements can effect huge changes. Often quoted as "the butterfly effect."
13. A possible barrier to success.
14. (2 words) Use of several media in one curriculum. It is typically a combination of classroom instruction and other training that includes self-directed use of online capabilities.
15. (3 words) Professional investigation into an event, first developed and used in the military, that focuses on performance improvement and allows individuals to learn for themselves what happened, why, and how to improve performance.

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Down

2. "_____ plan" A systematic effort by employers to create and foster an environment that encourages current employees to remain employed by having policies and practices in place that address their diverse needs.
3. (3 words) Process-focused and data-driven improvement strategy designed to improve business performance through improving specific areas of strategic business process.
4. (2 Words) Creator of the 4-Level Evaluation Model
5. "_____ Learning" A technique which results in long-term retention by the learner. This technique honors different learning preferences of each individual learner and uses experiential learning exercises (such as roleplays, mnemonics, props, and music)
6. "_____ Planning" Ensures the continuity of key (leadership) positions in the organization and the stability of tenure of personnel.
7. Planning, organizing, directing, and controlling of resources for a finite period of time to complete specific goals and objectives.
8. One who facilitates a conversation focused on helping the other move forward relative to their goals thus enabling change and transformation
9. (2 words) Beliefs, ideas, images, and verbal descriptions that we consciously or unconsciously form from our experiences and which (when formed) provide the lens through which we filter our experiences. They often heavily influence our thoughts and actions.

Answers on Page 10

The Learning Curve

by Amy Krenzke

Welcome 2011…a New Year and chance to reflect on 2010! As an opening for this article I would like to note the exciting news that ***Mark Durgee was the winner of the 2010 Dr. Deb Colky Workplace Learning and Performance (WLP) Student Award.*** This award was created to honor Dr. Deb Colky's contributions to the WLP community and student learning efforts in WLP.

Mark Durgee is "the" founding member of the CCASTD Student Special Interest Group (SSIG) and has grown a small but mighty, three person group into a formidable force that hosted events, increased student membership in CCASTD and reached out to students via social networking in 2010. In his practice, Mark has recently taken a job in Mexico teaching English as a Second Language and is very happy to put the skills he learned at Roosevelt University to work! Congratulations to Mark and we know he will continue to be a leader as a student at Roosevelt University and in Workplace Learning and Performance.

In considering what I wanted to write for this article I had many ideas. (When you are a student in a Masters Degree program, especially one that works full-time, your mind spins with ideas incessantly which is both exhilarating and also slightly irritating when you want your mind to just take a break.) As a student in the Master of Arts Program in Educating Adults (MAEA) at DePaul University – School for New Learning, I have learned many practical skills that I use frequently in my practice as a store manager. Just this week I used a tool that I learned in my Facilitating Adult Learning course to have a discussion with one of my employees. It led to a productive conversation that produced the results that I desired. Prior to joining the program at DePaul, I had the ability to do these tasks but only now realize the impact of my actions on my team's learning and the resulting improved performance.

Ideas swirling around and what to make the focal point for this article? As you see transferring the skills learned in the classroom to practice is a big focus both in our WLP program and personally for me as an adult learner. This got me thinking about ***what the most valuable skill is that I have learned so far*** from the MAEA program at DePaul. ***The answer, without question would be the practice of critical self-reflection and self-assessment.*** Before I started the program, I had somewhat of a practice of journaling for work and making notes

Continued on next page

of accomplishments. I did not, on a regular basis, investigate my practice, delve into what was really going on and process it through critical thinking. Self-reflection and self-assessment have been extremely valuable in my practice and in making me a better learner and a better leader.

Here's a little metaphor to help you make that learning connection. Have you ever cleaned out a junk drawer? I keep a drawer in which I place things that are important but are more for me to go back to when I need them. I haven't cleaned this "junk drawer" out since early 2010. I was picking through it and found notes from events and meetings, notes for myself on employee meetings, action plans, and an old flattened granola bar (don't ask). This event, "Cleaning of the Junk Drawer" truly set me out on a path of self-reflection and assessment. I read through my notes on some very difficult employee conversations as well as notes documenting the cooperation I have developed with my immediate supervisor. I now appreciate the fact that we have developed a trustworthy relationship over the past year.

In digging through the "junk drawer" I also did a self-assessment and realized there were many successes here, but also many more opportunities that I can grow from to make my workplace environment better for myself, my employees, and our customers. This process also gave me a chance to creatively think of new workplace learning opportunities that I can enact in the future.

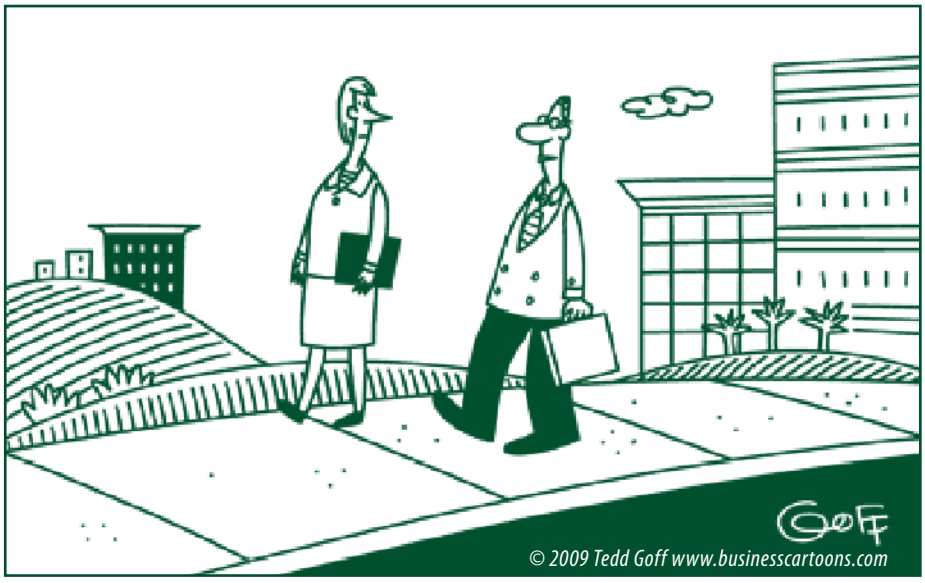
This is obviously a very informal use of critical self-reflection and self-assessment, but the cleaning out of this "junk drawer" gave me an authentic opportunity to use what I have learned in my coursework and transfer it to my workplace. After this incident I wrote an email to a co-worker on the topic and that presented an opportunity in best practice sharing on the use of critical self-reflection in the workplace.

One thing always leads to another and using critical self-reflection and self-assessment in the workplace has given me the chance to see all of my learning experiments, new ideas, successes and failures in a new light. My advisor, Dr. Catherine Marienau, wrote an article for the *Adult Education Quarterly* on self-assessment at work and she opens the article with the thought, "A hallmark of an educated person is the capacity to reflect on and learn from experience such that the learning yields meaningful interpretations of life occurrences and informs future actions." (Marienau, p.135) This is *exactly* what happened to me when cleaning out the "junk drawer." The process became a 'meaningful interpretation' of actions in my workplace and in reflection, I used everything in that junk drawer to take action, make changes and create learning opportunities for myself and others. That is exhilarating and exciting! I hope I have inspired you to clean out your workplace "junk drawer" (even if it's metaphorical or maybe it's your email inbox) and take a little time for some critical self-reflection and self-assessment.

This year as President/Team Leader for the CCASTD Student Special Interest Group (SSIG) I will be making transferring classroom learning to workplace practice our focus for 2011. We are excited to embark on a new year and grow our group. If you are interested in joining the SSIG I encourage you to email me at srccastdsig@gmail.com and I can notify you of upcoming meetings and events. Happy New Year to everyone and now get out there self-reflect, self-assess and learn!

1. Marienau, C. (1999). Self-assessment at work: Outcomes of adult learners' reflections on practice. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *49*(3), 135-146.

Amy Krenzke is a student at DePaul University – School for New Learning in the Masters of Arts in Educating Adults program. Recently she completed an insightful independent study of Mindfulness and using Mindfulness in the Workplace. Besides being a student, Amy is the store manager of the LEGO Store in Chicago and enjoys helping her team grow and develop every day. Amy can be contacted at akrenzke@gmail.com.



"We seem to have a slight problem with our superabundant money supply."

The Changing Face of Learning Professionals

by Sharon L. B. Beery, PMP, CPLP

There's one thing about change – at an organizational level or within the learning discipline — you either adjust to it and move forward or ignore it and get left behind. Whether you like change or not, it's going to happen.

I have been in technical environments for most of my career. When I first started, training departments were mostly made up of people who fell into the role by accident, not by design. However, once these newly-minted trainers acclimated to their new field, they whole-heartedly embraced the learning theories, Instructional Systems Design (ISD) models, and evaluation and delivery techniques involved in short order.

As time progressed, I noticed that training departments, especially in small businesses that had grown into large corporations, increasingly became occupied with the necessity to follow learning theories in their purest form. They focused on management skills training and neglected to tailor and integrate learning methodologies with the technical side of the businesses. Thus, the divergence between soft-skills training programs and technical training programs began. Of course, the degree of divergence between these two factions hinged a great deal on the background and experiences of the training leaders in the respective organizations.

Changing Roles

Today, the roles and responsibilities of learning professionals, especially their leadership, are changing. It is no longer enough to understand learning theories and developmental models and attempt to implement them as training standards across an organization. I have experienced this approach, and found that it simply alienates most technical managers and technical training professionals. What they want is to have a course written so it looks professional, addresses applicable government or process improvement standards, is technically accurate, and gets delivered to its intended audience as quickly as possible to address the identified technical deficiencies in their organizations.

I know how they feel; I was once in their shoes. When I asked for help, I got information about some Instructional Systems Design methods I would need to follow. At first, my eyes glazed over. Next, I reported back to my department that I didn't have time to jump through all those hoops. At that point, I decided to write and design the needed course materials on my own. The next time I had a training development project, do you think I went back to my Training Department for help? No way!

Why Not?

The training department did not address (or understand) my needs or my environment. That nicely discussed importance of a structured learning environment was informative but I wanted to know how I could add some structure to my work, to make it a little more professional and still meet the requirements of my technical audience. I did not:

- Want to include kick-off activities so everyone could get acquainted; they worked together and already knew each other.
- Care that instructional design is historically and traditionally rooted in cognitive and behavioral psychology.
- Want to know that Bloom divided educational objectives into three domains, or that Kirkpatrick identified four levels of training evaluation, and Gagne defined nine events of instruction.

I had real work to do. Best practices are wonderful, and I'm glad the Training Department staff knew them, but all I needed some quick, easy tailoring applied to my task.

Thus, the chasm between learning professionals from the soft-skills training ranks and those from the technical training ranks grows. Though some training leaders have successfully embraced the two; many have not.

"She's a Traitor"

Now, I can just imagine that many of you, my fellow learning professionals, are now thinking of me as a traitor to the discipline. I'm not! I'm very much on your side! I have come a long way from my eye-rolling days. I agree with the methodologies and design techniques, and in using quantifiable data from evaluations. I believe in needs assessments, audience determination, and trend analysis. *But I also believe in a strong marriage between proven instructional methodologies and best practices, with the technical side of a business.* Although completing yearly needs assessments and Individual Development Plans is a valuable data-gathering practice it does not unite soft-skills and technical training requirements at an organizational level (although it is a step in the right direction.)

A Botturi and Stubbs publication, in a chapter written by Jason K. McDonalds, "Translate to Communicate: Facilitating Client Understanding of Design Language," illustrates that our discipline is recognizing that a better language is needed to more effectively communicate

Continued on next page

with our clients. As noted in the chapter summary, "Instructional designers should focus more on the fundamental meaning they are attempting to communicate through their design languages than on the mechanics and style of those languages."

Proving Value

Those of us who are learning professionals face many challenges in technical environments. We need to incorporate government standards, CMMI® organizational training requirements, and ISO standards, to name a few, and we need to follow sound training development practices. We need to incorporate professional learning into the culture of the people running the business, and we need to show value. But more than that, we need to prove value. We need to be able to:

- Quantify our business value
- Show that we contribute to the business' growth,
- Illustrate our contribution to customers' and our projects' efficiencies—not just individuals' personal growth.

There must be that connection to value provided, otherwise, training appears to be a financial drain instead of a business necessity.

The Optimal Situation

An optimal training organization assimilates with the business in which it operates. It:

- Proves that, because of its training programs, the business wins more contracts and has more highly skilled people who can support the company's strategic goals.
- Demonstrates to leadership that it is a true learning environment, interested not only in individuals' personal growth, but the professional growth that is aligned with the company's mission.
- Benefits everyone. Customers are happy because they are being supported by highly skilled contractors. Employees are happy because they have professional growth opportunities to help their careers. The company's leadership is pleased because it is developing a skilled workforce that can address new markets and future opportunities.

Creating an Enterprise Learning Environment

There are many process improvement models that can be used to change a soft-skills training focus to an enterprise training focus in a technology company. CMMI® is one that I have found easy to follow and applies to both decentralized and centralized training organizations. It is a simple framework which requires a bit of work to apply it in your organization, but its guidelines for Organizational Training are straightforward. Its focus is a consolidation of training across the organization. However, that does not mean you need to control all training activities; you just need to know what is happening across your organization. There are easy, fast ways to consolidate training, too—even in a decentralized training structure. For example, with the implementation of an Enterprise Level Learning & Performance portal and outreach programs, such as training community of practice sessions, training departments can evolve into a viable learning resource accessible and of value to everyone in the organization.

Conclusion

Many in the Learning and Performance industry know that changes must be made to their training operations to prove true value to their organizations at-large, and to demonstrate a return on investment for the business. I personally find inspiration from articles about people whose ideas and solutions make them true champions of change. What they all seem to have in common is that they leave their traditional training management role after recognizing that integrating training within the business is not an option, it is a reality; it is the new face of the professional learning environment.

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Sharon L. B. Beery, PMP

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Crossword Puzzle Solution
(from page 7)

Across	***Down***
1. Howard Gardner	*2. Retention*
6. Scope Creep	*3. Six Sigma Methodology*
10. Active Listening	*4. Don Kirkpatrick*
11. Measurement	*5. Accelerated*
12. Chaos	*6. Succession*
13. Constraint	*7. Project Management*
14. Blended Learning	*8. Coach*
15. After Action Review	*9. Mental Models*

Filling Your Brilliance Box

by Dana Schuster

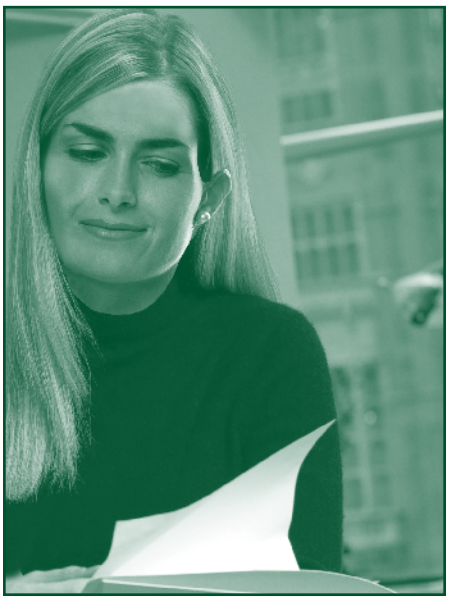
When was the last time you looked at your resume? I mean really read through it and reflected on all that you have achieved? How do you showcase your accomplishments? We all have moments of brilliance. What are yours?

I found myself working a lot throughout the past year and not stopping to smell the roses. I needed to take a moment to reflect, so, I chose to take a good, hard look at my resume relative to my achievements. I realized that I had accomplished many things that should be on my resume but weren't. I've been missing my own small wins by being lost in weekly meetings, web conferences and project deadlines.

In our economy today, it may be difficult to get recognition of success from others in the workplace. Unfortunately, the recession has made raises and bonuses scarce for a number of years. But work is not only about recognition and compensation, it's about doing work that is challenging and inspiring.

How often do we, as WLP professionals, wear a thousand hats at work and forget about our passions and talents and the reason we got into this field? Recognizing your own wins is just a chance to say, "Oh yeah, I am good at what I do." Or, "I remember why I love this role." Making a commitment to reflect on your accomplishments will help keep you motivated. Think about what inspires you.

I reflected further. Why are we in such a hurry? This was the start of a great process to think about and feel proud of what I've accomplished. We all have moments of brilliance – it's important to take some time to recognize them. Acknowledging past accomplishments helps "keep the faith" during tough times. A quote I once heard said, *"Keep it with faith, practice it with keenness, perfect it with faithfulness-then though the task be great, you will surely succeed"* (Cleary, 1993). I believe if we have faith and trust in our abilities, everything else will fall into place.



One way to build trust in our abilities and successes is to create a *Brillance box*. A Brilliance box is a place to keep all of your projects, ideas and accomplishments that inspire you. This box can be spread out online, in your home, even in your car if you'd like! Create your Brilliance box in a blog, a Facebook page, on a wall or on a vision board in your home.

Think about your diplomas, certificates, and other pieces of recognition for your hard work – where are they now? Mine were in a drawer safely tucked away (you know, in case the diploma burglars break in!). Would it inspire you to see them on your wall after coming home from a long day?

I put my diplomas up and it makes a huge difference in helping me to stay focused and confident. Now, I make regular visits to that wall of accomplishments. It is a big part of my Brilliance box. Yes, that's right, it's okay to think about yourself for a moment and appreciate your brilliance!

Once you've collected your past and current accomplishments, plan for future brilliance. Think about where you want to be in five years. Write those thoughts down as goals and prepare a written agreement with yourself. How do you stay on track? Look for a mentor that can give you feedback about how you are obtaining those goals. This person doesn't have to be a professional mentor – it could be a friend or colleague that you trust. Check local chapters and professional organizations to see if they have a mentoring program.

Here are some other tips to keep your Brillance box filled:

Goals. Take some time to create goals: what do **you** want to do? Maybe you want to learn Flash or discover what another role in the office is about to compliment your everyday responsibilities. Maybe you want to move forward and networking is something you have put on the back burner. Why not Google the topic *Goal Setting* and see what comes up? Check out sites such as Psychology Today that dig deep into the minds of goal setting. Create an action plan with attainable milestones.

Take Notes. Take notes everyday about what new skill you learned or want to learn. This will help you monitor your

Continued on next page

inner progress for you – not just the organization. Put the notes into your iPhone, Blackberry or even on a post it! Your ideas can turn into a big component of creating change at a later time- believe me- I have seen it. This article is a great example. I started doing this and then wrote a tiny one sentence note in my iPhone.

Pictures. A picture is worth a thousand words right? Post those pictures of happy and/or successful moments on the wall. They can be pictures of graduation, a favorite moment, new friends you have met through school, or your local chapters like the CCASTD, CISPI, or the national chapter, ASTD. So what is the big deal of capturing those moments? These are memories that are yours forever that can inspire you to remember who you are and where you are headed.

Books. Most of us are lifelong learners. What do lifelong learners do? They read and learn! Are your books scattered randomly throughout your home? Buy a bookshelf and display those inspiring words close at hand so you can grab one at anytime to remind you of why you loved reading it in the first place! These are your books, so highlight and underline away!

Share a Favorite Project. Are you extremely proud of a certain project? Share it with a friend or someone you know will appreciate your success. Think outside of the workplace. It's great to get feedback from friends and loved ones too! Make use of all the social networking tools to create something inspiring that is just for you! Then, share your project and watch how the feedback creates motivation. Have you tried Google Docs? It's a great place to share special projects. You can share your presentations, pictures, drawings and more!

I wanted to share these ideas about what may help you to take a moment to appreciate **your brilliance!** They say repeating helps us to learn, so I figure the more times I mention ***your brilliance*** the more likely it is to sink in. So hang those diplomas, awards, inspirational pieces, and certificates on the wall; they are only gathering dust in the drawer. Reflect on those small wins that really made a difference in the end. You and your brilliance will thank yourself later.

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Dana Schuster is a professional instructional designer who specializes in eLearning and leadership development. She is a native of Glendale Heights, Illinois. Dana values community, diversity, teamwork, and considers leadership a critical component of organizational success. Her graduate degree is from Roosevelt University in Training & Development. Dana's undergraduate degree is in Organizational Leadership. Dana wishes to combine the theories she has learned into a great practice where Leadership and Training & Development walk hand in hand. She can be contacted at: dana.schuster@yahoo.com

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A Message from 2011 CCASTD President Trish Uhl, PMP, CPLP

Happy New Year!

Just a brief note to highlight some changes to our CCASTD monthly programming:

- Focus on networking and knowledge sharing. We're still offering some great presentations, but we've shortened them to 50 minutes. We're committed to helping you connect with your learning & performance professional peers over a hot meal, while you swap best practices, lessons learned, and enjoy that evening's program.
- Dinner meetings on the third Thursday of every month. We're making it easy to get CCASTD meetings on your calendar by standardizing when they're held, and putting them on a rotation schedule targeting different Chicagoland locations.
- Standard pricing includes dinner. Same price, every month - $35 for CCASTD members; $35 for Alliance Group members; $45 for non-members; $30 for students. Dinner includes soup, salad, an entrée, dessert, soft drinks, coffee & hot tea.
- CPLP recertification credit. Individuals who hold the Certified Professional in Learning & Performance (CPLP) credential receive one (1) recertification point, per dinner meeting.
- Register before the deadline as walk-ins cannot be accommodated. The registration deadline is always by 11:59pm Central on the Sunday before the dinner meeting. Payment is expected at the time of registration. Refunds cannot provided.

Our January meeting was a roaring success with 76 people in attendance

There are plenty of other programming opportunities on the horizon - including our Professional Development Networks (PDNs), peer-to-peer networking events, and workshops facilitated by industry leaders. Stay tuned for details!

On behalf of the 2011 CCASTD Board of Directors, we look forward to serving you as we all learn to challenge ordinary people to do extraordinary things! Cheers to an exciting New Year!

- Trish

Upcoming CCASTD Programs

CCASTD Announces a New Monthly Chapter Meeting Format!

The overall design of our meetings will follow an updated format at locations all around the city of Chicago and suburbs. We will meet on the third Thursday of every month for a reserved, three-course dinner, followed by a fifty-minute presentation featuring many well-known speakers in our field. Registration for our meetings will open on the first Sunday of each month. We recommend that you reserve your place early; registration will close on the Sunday evening, prior to the event. Payment is required at the time of registration as no walk-ins can be accepted.

Mark your calendars with these upcoming highlights:

- **January 20, 2011** – State of the Chapter, featuring, 2011 CCASTD President, Trish Uhl, PMP, CPLP
- **February 17, 2011** – Build Better Learning with Improv, featuring Matt Elwell, CPLP, CEO, ComedySportz Theatre
- **March 17, 2011** – Informal Learning Q&A, featuring Bob Mosher, CEO LearningGuide
  ** Join us for a one (1) day "Essentials of Informal Learning" with former Microsoft Learning Evangelist, Bob Mosher also on March 17 in Schaumburg!*
- **April 21, 2011** – Measuring & Evaluating Training, featuring Ken Phillips, PhD, CPLP, CEO Phillips Associates
- **May 19, 2011** – Engaging Learners in the "Orderly Conversation," featuring Greg Owen-Boger, VP Turpin Communications

Watch www.ccastd.org for more details as we work to bring Bob Pike, Jim Kirkpatrick, and other learning leaders to the Chicagoland area later this year! We look forward to seeing current and new members. Bring a guest – all are welcome!

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