TRAINING TODAY

MARCH 2012

CHICAGOLAND CHAPTER ASTD WORKPLACE LEARNING & PERFORMANCE

Let's Get the Ball Rolling

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FOR WORKPLACE LEARNING & PERFORMANCE PROFESSIONALS IN THE CHICAGOLAND AREA

TRAINING TODAY

MARCH 2012

Training Today, the magazine of the Chicagoland Chapter of ASTD, is published four times a year as a service to its membership.

WINNER APEX'98 AWARDS FOR PUBLICATION EXCELLENCE

Letter From the Editor

Greetings!

Already we find ourselves in March, 2012! Where have the first two months of the year gone? CCASTD and the new Board Members have been very active in this first part of the year. Here are a few highlights of those activities:

- Our new President, Sue Weller, hit the ground running and has outlined her plan and the theme for the year. Read more in her Letter from the President on page 3.
- The Programming Committee put together a sold-out January Dinner meeting. They have another grand event planned for March. See page 15 for more details.
- WLPI certificate sessions will be starting up again in early March. See the dates and registration information on page 3.

In this issue, you'll also find timely articles with topics very relevant to Workplace Learning and Performance. Article topics include ideas to infuse teams with creativity, ways to engage learners in learning events, tips for online facilitation, recent LMS trends and employee engagement, appreciation and how it translates to learning and the work environment. This is great information we can all use!

As always, feel free to contact any of the CCASTD Board Members with thoughts, input and feedback on ways we can serve you better in 2012.

Louann

Louann Swedberg

A Letter from the President

Welcome to our first 2012 edition of Training Today. As you read this letter, we'll likely have the worst of winter over and will be ready to welcome in spring. I personally love the spring as it's a chance to refresh and renew. If you're like me, you've hibernated a bit too much and as the weather gets nicer, you start the annual spring cleaning of your abode, opening all the windows and letting the fresh air in.

So, rather than focusing on a lot of "blah, blah, blah" about how I, as your new President, am happy to serve (**which I am,** by the way) I'd like to move the focus from me and put it on YOU. How are YOU opening the windows of your mind and letting the fresh air in? In other words, what are you doing differently in 2012 and how can CCASTD help you accomplish your goals?

As you may know, CCASTD's theme for 2012 is, "**Engage – Execute – Exceed**." CCASTD will have many opportunities for you to engage. Whether it's via one of our monthly dinner meetings, which have recently attracted over 100 people; any of our SIGs (special interest groups); a CCASTD sponsored webinar, our new YouTube site; our LinkedIn site; volunteering at a CCASTD event; volunteering at a CCASTD community event or signing up to be either a mentor, a mentee or both, 2012 will be the year to engage.

It's our belief that the more you engage with CCASTD and members of your workplace learning performance community, the better able you'll be to execute to your plan and ultimately, exceed those goals you've set for yourself.

Are you ready for a game changing year? Let's open up, let the fresh air in, and exceed together.

Looking forward to engaging with you all!

Sue

Sue Weller
2012 CCASTD President

Improving Teams with a Dose of Creativity

By Renie McClay, CPLP

Innovation is vital to the health of organizations and to the functioning of successful work teams. Often teams naturally stick to familiar practices they know to be successful. And of course, that makes perfect sense. But imagine what might happen if a team sought out better ways of working and constantly searched for new efficiencies. Certainly, greater results would follow. So what does innovation mean in a team environment? What does being creative really mean? How do you get your team to access their creative energies and take advantage of the benefits of innovation? Consider the following situation…

The annual sales meeting planning committee had been meeting weekly every Monday morning for more than a month. Everyone takes a turn and gives their updates, just like always. I don't particularly want to be here – I have done my tasks and am annoyed that some others haven't met their deadlines – again. And they are asking for help from the team to complete what they should have done already. Next, the leader asks for ideas for an ice breaker activity to conduct during the first evening reception. He's looking for something to get people interacting across functions – something to prevent marketing people talking to marketing people, sales people talking to sales people, customer service people – well, you get the idea. No one can think of anything. There is no energy in the room. Our only ideas are what we have done before.

What do we need here? We need energy, ideas, and some good questions! Initial ideas stimulate more ideas because ideas generate other thoughts which in turn generate more ideas! That is the way it works. Have you tried to think of a solution and come up with nothing, but as soon as you talk to someone else the ideas start popping? This is one of the advantages of adding people to the creative process – having other people to bounce ideas off of.

Let's start by looking at the difference between creativity and innovation. Creativity is all about generating new ideas – it is thinking outside the box. Innovation is the act of using these new ideas to create something that did not exist before. Innovation puts creativity into action.

Many techniques exist to increase creativity on a team. If you are interested in trying some, here are a few to get you started:

Get Out of Left Brain Thinking. Our left brain is very important. Most of us spend large amounts of time using our left brain. It is about structure, logic, analysis and getting things done in a linear fashion. Although it is efficient, left brain thinking can be a roadblock to creative thinking. Dan Pink, in his book, *A Whole New Mind,* tells us why right-brainers will rule the future. I'm not the only one who thinks this is important! So, engage music, nature, interaction, movement – anything to get out of that logic/linear thinking mode.

Carry a notebook and bring ideas to team meetings and brainstorming sessions. Thomas Edison carried an idea book with him all the time. The book was not simply his "to do" list. He carried the book to capture ideas when they occurred to him during his day whether walking down the street or taking a break sitting on a park bench. Remember, creative thinking requires relaxed time and space for the ideas to surface. Make sure everyone on the team understands that creativity does not happen when you are stressed out trying to meet a deadline.

Capture Your Creative Output in Different Ways. Bulleted lists on a flip chart are often efficient. Why not try capturing ideas in a non-linear way such as in a random pattern, or a circle. Try mind mapping (many Google articles to help you with this). Visual images help stimulate additional ideas and illustrate potential relationships. Remember the old adage, "a picture is worth a thousand words." Visuals help you get from creative ideas to innovation you can implement.

Create a New Environment. Another way to stimulate the right brain of your team is to change the look of "meetings." It is easy for the same people to meet in the same room and do the same things – you get stuck in a rut. A rut is a coffin with the ends cut out. Break the routine! Innovation and creativity are hard pressed to thrive in a rut.

Make the meeting environment stimulating. Occasionally change the meeting room and things about the meeting. This can mean try a different food, have a theme, dress differently. Decorate the meeting room with a theme for the purpose of stimulating ideas on a topic. If you are planning a global meeting, plan for food from different countries attending. Use music from different cultures. Differences can be subtle or dramatic. It is all about expressing creativity.

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Continued: Improving Teams with a Dose of Creativity

Following are some questions that can generate ideas for creating an idea generating environment.

- How would you describe an environment that stimulates ideas?
- What small changes can you make to the current environment to make it more appealing?
- What changes would stimulate people visually?
- How can you use sound or music to soothe or stimulate?
- How can you use taste or fragrance to help create the environment you are looking for?
- What are environments you find comfortable to be in?
- How would your team describe the desired environment?
- Would you want colors that are stimulating or soothing?

Not all ideas will be practical or affordable, but it is good to think of ways to stimulate people – even if it is just occasionally. Creativity is a muscle that needs regular use to keep it toned. Team members can support each other in this effort.

Adapted from *10 Steps to Successful Teams*, used with permission from ASTD Press.

Renie McClay is passionate about innovation. She has facilitated programs on creativity and innovation at a number of Fortune 500 organizations, and is certified as an Innovation Trainer, Innovation Facilitator, and Innovation Coach by Solution People. She was trained with Second City and uses improvisation as a tool to help companies improve creativity and develop more productive and innovative teams.

*Currently, Renie is Adjunct Faculty for Roosevelt University, Chicago, she consults on a wide variety of sales and learning initiatives and is a facilitator for American Management Association courses. She is also the author of "**10 Steps to Successful Teams**" (ASTD Press), "**Sales Training Solutions**" (Kaplan), co-author of "**The Essential Guide to Training Global Audiences**" (Pfeiffer), "**Fortify Your Sales Force: Leading and Training Exceptional Teams**" (Pfeiffer).*

In 2011, Renie achieved the Certified Professional of Learning Performance (CPLP). She has a Masters in Global Talent Development from DePaul University. She is the founder of Inspired Learning LLC.

For more information, visit http://www.inspiredtolearn.net..

Being Engaged is Just the Beginning: *Make it Last Using Performance Centered Learning®*

By Roy Strauss

Julie was beaming as she showed off her new engagement ring to her admiring friends. "He just proposed to me last night and I accepted!" She held it out and they nearly swooned. However, when she visited her parents that weekend, their reaction was somewhat different. They were happy for her, but were decidedly less excited than her friends had been. "That's a start," said her father. "How many children are you planning to have?" asked her mother. These were the voices of experience. Julie felt confused and let down. Why weren't they as excited as she was? Didn't they understand *she was engaged*! That was what was important!

Little did Julie realize the hard work of marriage was yet to come. True, for a successful marriage it is important to become engaged first. But this merely sets the stage; engagement is not the goal in itself or the end of the story.

Likewise in our field, we constantly hear that to provide good training we need to get the learner *engaged,* and training has to be *interactive and fun*. To motivate the learner and keep their attention, we need good graphics and games, as if this were the end in itself. We know that it is not the end in itself and not the end of the story. The real goal is to provide the knowledge and skills so learners can perform the relevant job task, be it sales, customer service, operating software or machinery, or leading a team.

Just like the marriage example, to provide good training we need to involve the learner, but just because the learner is engaged (paying attention) it doesn't mean they are necessarily learning anything useful. They may be watching the colorful animations, or laughing at the instructor's jokes, or waiting for candy to be tossed out for correct answers. This doesn't necessarily mean they are getting any closer to mastering the learning objectives. While a presentation may both hold the learner's attention and provide good content, it may not be an effective learning experience.

Based on the current research in **Cognitive Science,** we know that in our minds, *content and context are linked and encoded together*; information is stored along with the situation in which it was learned. If not taught together, then the content is largely inert information (facts), and cannot be easily applied to the relevant situation. In the scientific literature this linking is called "Context-Dependent Memory." (For more information see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Context-dependent_memory.) This is why, for example, if an important event in one's life occurs while they happen to hear music, then when they hear that piece of music again, they will most likely remember the event.

As an example in the training field, consider that simply reading a software user manual rarely allows one to actually start using that software on the job. Before one can perform the skill, the knowledge (which buttons to click, menus to use, etc.) must be learned and practiced in context (on a live computer running the software to do real tasks). In fact, the time spent first reading the user manual is considerably less beneficial than spending the same amount of time practicing with the software to accomplish real-world tasks.

We believe learners are entitled to training experiences that are not only engaging and instructive, but that prepare them to actually perform the job task at hand. As business professionals, we do not always have the budgetary resources we would like, but we must still deliver effective training. How can we reconcile these factors? The good news is that effective training is not a matter of budget, but of training design, and crafting a high-quality learning experience.

How can one do this? Designing training programs that place the learner into relevant, realistic situations which progress from simple to complex, and challenge them to make the correct decisions as they work through those situations makes for effective training. Each scenario has multiple decision points, and at each decision point, the learner is provided with the information they need to make the decision and move forward.

By providing the information when it is needed (or just-in-time), and using it immediately in that context, the information (content) is linked to the appropriate situation, and will be retrieved more reliably when a similar situation (context) arises on the job.

Consider this example: If you were going to have a surgical procedure, how would you like the surgeon to have been trained?

1) Motivational Presentation (Message – do the operation safely!)
2) Informational education (Here is the knowledge you need to perform the procedure)
3) Scenario-based practice (Practice performing the operation)

Obviously #3!

Many think that the learner should receive all three presentations in that order, but this is not necessary and is actually a poor use of the learner's time. When properly designed, the Scenario-based practice method (#3) will accomplish the first two points as well. By placing the learner in a relevant situation and asking them to make decisions, they find it inherently interesting (accomplishing #1); and by providing content when they need it to make the decision, they will gain the information needed (accomplishing #2). Even better, that information will be encoded with the relevant situation for reliable recall on the job.

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What is the proper way to design or write a scenario-based practice method that accomplishes all three elements? Here are some guidelines:

- **Identify scenarios that are relevant and realistic** to the learner and their anticipated on-the-job experiences – this creates inherently motivating programs.
- **Organize scenarios from simple to complex** – this gives learners a feeling of security and mastery of the materials, which is very important for lessening tension so learning can occur.
- **Give learners just enough information to begin** the first scenario – keep the initial boring orientation stuff to a minimum so you don't lose their interest before learning even starts.
- **Use the scenario as a framework to ask learners to make decisions** – this takes them from one relevant decision-point to the next (teachable moments), so they are continuously involved in the unfolding scenario and are engaged and challenged with a relevant situation.
- **At the teachable moment, give them the content they need to make the decision** – this makes sure content is stored with the proper context, so that later in the work situation they will be able to recall the training experience, and reliably retrieve that content.
- **Do not provide content ahead of time, outside of a scenario context – when time is spent learning conten**t outside the scenario context, that time spent is largely wasted, because that content is inert, and not easily retrievable when the relevant context comes along.

We call this scenario-based training method Performance Centered Learning®, because it focuses on putting the user in a situation to perform the task, and in so doing learn the skill. Fortunately this method is applicable to any training media or method, be it live instruction, elearning, social media or self-study workbooks. And to apply it and engage the learner does not require a large production budget or high-tech gimmickry.

Whether you are writing a self-instructional workbook, performing a live classroom session, or designing high-tech elearning, or social networking, if you start by placing they learner into a realistic situation, ask them to make decisions and give them the correct content and feedback at that moment, they will not only become engaged, but the content will become wedded to the right context, and they will have a successful marriage of skills and knowledge on the job!

Roy Strauss has been designing and developing technology-based training for over 20 years, and believes learners are entitled to engaging and energizing learning experiences that provide them with real skills they can immediately apply to their jobs. To realize this vision, he founded Cedar Interactive 12 years ago. Cedar Interactive works with organizations in Chicago and nationwide providing custom learning solutions, including instructional design and development, as well as technological solutions to improve personnel performance. Contact Roy at: rstrauss@cedarinterative.com, or 847 579-1701.

Tips from the Trenches…
Life as an Online Learning Instructor

By Dawn Smith

The first time I facilitated a live class online, it was unnerving! Basically, I was talking to my computer monitor and not receiving any feedback from the students. I remember asking myself several questions: Do they understand? Do they have questions? Is there anything they'd like me to elaborate on? Are my students still alive?

When I asked for feedback, I received it in the form of a "green check mark" or a "red X". I got very few questions from the students, and they seemed hesitant to use their microphones. Most of the questions I did receive came to me through the classroom chat window.

I have to say, a lot of these first experience "negatives" were a result of poorly designed material. My client had basically dumped the PowerPoint slides into the virtual classroom and said "you're all set, teach it!" In addition, the online timeline was identical to the face-to-face classroom timeline (8am to 4pm). Can you imagine staring at your computer screen for 8 hours with someone rambling on about technical stuff? YIKES! And this was a 5-day class! From my point of view as the facilitator, that's an exhausting amount of time teaching on a computer.

So, not knowing any better, I did what most first time online instructors do - resort to my normal lecture-style of delivery that I used in the traditional classroom. I felt the class was unsuccessful, but the students were very kind to me in their evaluations.

This first experience prompted me to explore live, online learning and facilitation techniques. I knew it could be better for both the student and instructor experiences. That's where my interest and desire into making the virtual classroom a better place to work and learn began.

Since then I've facilitated many online sessions and learned a lot! Here are some rules that I live by as an online instructor:

1. **Eliminate all distractions.** When I am in session:
   - I am not available to anyone but my students. All communication tools are offline including my email, online chat, and cell phone. I keep interruptions to an "emergency only" basis when I teach in the face-to-face classroom, the same holds true in my online classroom.
   - I have a "do not disturb, class is in session" sign for my door. My co-workers may not realize I am in an online session. The sign lets others know that I am not to be interrupted.
   - I always conduct my sessions with a clean work area, having only the things I need to conduct that session in front of me. I clear all other projects and materials from my work area to remove any temptations that may distract me from the session I am facilitating.

2. **Plan, Prepare, and Practice.** Even with 10 years of experience, I still diligently plan each session, prepare each activity with a detailed lesson plan, and practice the delivery to better manage the flow of the class. It has been my experience that the better I plan, prepare, and practice, the more efficient and effective my online course will be.

3. **Walk a mile in your learner's shoes.** I never want to lose site of the online learning environment from a student's perspective:
   - When I first started teaching online, I took a few virtual classes to get familiar with the environment as a student. This helped me tremendously as I developed my teaching style. I still participate in online learning as a student to keep the student vantage point in perspective and to experience

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other facilitation styles.

- I always have two sessions "logged in" to my online classroom when I am teaching. One session as the facilitator (or moderator) and a second session as a student. This allows me to lead my class but also see what I am delivering as a student sees it. This way I can easily identify technical issues or errors and resolve them before my students bring them to my attention.

4. **Teach learners how to learn first.** For many of my students their last learning experience was "school", where you show up, sit at a desk, listen to the teacher, then go home and do your homework. It was clear that this is what they were expecting from their "adult" training experiences as well. I quickly became a believer that learners (both face-to-face and online) have to be re-taught how to learn, re-establish expectations of what they should take away from training, and take ownership of their learning to get the most out of it. This is especially critical in the online environment, because of that lack of 'physical' connection with the instructor and other participants.

5. **Remember it's their class not yours.** This thought is always top of mind as I plan, prepare, and practice my course material. This class is not about me delivering amazing content. My role is to integrate content, ideas, and discussion points that facilitate conversation and collaboration among my students. Part of being successful is to set the expectations with my students even before the session starts through:

   - Pre-course work which requires the student to prepare items ahead of time to share in class.
   - Pre-course discussions using online discussion boards. This allows students to get to know me and each other before the first day of class.

   In all pre-course activities and discussions it becomes clear to the students that they will get out of my course what they put into it. My most successful classes are those in which the students are in interacting at a level in which they are actually delivering portions of the session.

6. **Be flexible.** Things happen: lost internet connections, faulty headsets, or a student that is not familiar with the learning platform you are teaching on. This was a little challenging for me in the beginning as I am a "ducks in a row" person. I learned to accept this as part of the environment, stay positive, work around the obstacles, and keep the class moving.

7. **Use pre and post activities.** What happens before the class starts and after the class ends is important. It sets the stage to hit the ground running in the first session and it keeps learning alive and growing afterwards.

8. **Maximize the benefits of the online learning environment.** I have found countless benefits to delivering courses online. Would you ever discuss a thought or idea with the person next to you in a face-to-face class while the instructor was presenting? Certainly not, that would be rude and definitely frowned upon. In the online classroom, chat entries happen throughout the session, regardless of what material is being presented or the activity that is

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going on. Participants are free to communicate ideas and thoughts at any time and other participants react, comment, and collaborate instantly. Gone is the day of the forgotten thought or idea that never comes to the table because we had to wait our turn talk.

9. **It is the same, but different.** When I first started, I was surprised at the similarities between teaching in the face-to-face classroom and the online classroom. In both environments I needed to set my learning objectives, plan my messages and activities, design relevant materials, and deliver a memorable session.

   One difference that I struggled with was how to establish a relationship or connection with each student individually. Since each person learns differently and at a different pace, getting to know each student's individual personalities provides a means for detecting student understanding. In the face-to-face classroom it is easy to see that a student is "lost" or confused just by looking at them, but in the online classroom I needed to look for more subtle clues. I quickly learned how to use pre-course activities to get to know my students before we even "met" in the classroom the first day.

   I discovered that a very interactive ice breaker was extremely helpful to loosen things up (believe it or not, even the most confident adults can be rather shy and nervous on the first day of class) – this helps establish a more fun and relaxed atmosphere.

   I also adjusted my teaching style to check in verbally with individuals more frequently, asked more validation questions, and encouraged more responses from students more frequently.

10. **Maximum session is length is 2 hours.** I build online learning sessions not to exceed 2 hours. After that time, I find that my students are not as attentive and need a break. I do have courses I teach over a week's period of time that meet 4 hours a day but we meet for 2 hours in the morning and 2 hours in the afternoon. Since students are expected to complete a fair amount of self-study between sessions, over the week I am able cover the same amount of material that would be covered in a week long face-to face course. In the online environment, class time is spent hitting the main points, working through activities, and validating the student's understanding of the material.

11. **Never facilitate face-to-face training and online training simultaneously!** The design, delivery, interaction with the students, and learning activities

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are completely different in the face-to-face classroom vs. the online classroom. It is not uncommon for a learning professional to decide to bring students into their face to face classroom remotely. On the surface it seems like an efficient idea. However, the students connecting to the class remotely are merely listening to what is being said and watching PowerPoint slides on the screen in front of them. It is difficult for them to interact with the instructor when the instructor is busy teaching a room full of other students. This arrangement is not effective and does a disservice to everyone involved in the class.

12. **The online instructor-led learning environment is a piece of the learning puzzle, not the "end all, be all".** I love this environment but I recognize that it serves its purpose, has its place and is part of a strong learning strategy. However, it is not the only delivery method!

No two online sessions are the same. It seems with each session, I learn something new or a way to improve. For me, the online learning environment is energizing. I have made it my goal to combine my passion for teaching with my desire to promote excellence in online experiences for both myself as an instructor and for my students.

Dawn Smith is the creator and designer of Virtual Effect, a Learning Series for Online Instructors. Dawn has been working in learning and development since 1997, specifically with online and virtual technologies for over 10 years. She has taught countless classes both in synchronous (i.e. live) and asynchronous (i.e. anytime learning) environments. Her interests focus on the skills and knowledge needed to fully prepare new online instructors. Dawn has extensive experience working with adult learners and coaching/mentoring faculty in an online environment. Dawn holds a Master of Arts (MA) in Training and Development from Roosevelt University and a Master of Science (MS) in Management Information Systems from Northern Illinois University. Dawn has also completed doctorate-level coursework in adult instructional methodologies and researched models for developing exceptional online instructors.

More information about Dawn is available at ***www.mondolearning.com****. Dawn is one of many Learning Experts at Mondo Learning Solutions and can be reached at* ***dawn.smith@mondolearning.com*** *or 1-888-701-5503.*

Learning Management Systems: *Dinosaur? Necessary Evil? Critical Strategic Tool?*

By Alicia Shevetone

Reports, findings and experience from the field provide some ***Clarity*** *on this topic.*

Is the learning management system as we know it dead? There are many choices on the market; and those choices are currently morphing into talent management systems, social learning systems, and systems tailored to specific industry verticals. The options can be overwhelming as organizations struggle to decide whether, how, and which learning management system to deploy. Judging from the number of calls companies receive each year from clients seeking help with selection, implementation, integration, and maintenance, the LMS is not dead. Two major reports issued during the past year indicate that many of us are still struggling.

"The Current and Future State of Learning Management Systems," a survey report issued by *Expertus* and *TrainingIndustry, Inc.*, in late 2010, has this as its number 1 finding: "LMS satisfaction is mixed, with a 'B minus' average." In "Learning Management Systems 2011: The Definitive Buyer's Guide," Bersin & Associates went even further, noting, "The learning management system continues to have the largest percentage of dissatisfied customers of any HR system." On a scale of 1 to 5, survey respondents indicated an average satisfaction score of 3.36. *So what does this really mean for learning organizations and learning professionals in the field?*

A fragmented market. In his report for Bersin, author David Mallon notes that the LMS marketplace is becoming increasingly fragmented as vendors chase adaptability, offering SaaS, cloud, and PaaS (platform as a service) models. Further, many major players are adding elements for talent management, social learning, or vertical specialization.

"Almost all systems can handle most elearning and training administration needs," Mallon writes. "On the other hand, what the maturity does not guarantee is successful realization of… customer needs; many buyers remain generally frustrated with their systems."

The thrill is gone. David E., a Clarity Consultants LMS Implementation Specialist, observes, "Many organizations regard their LMS purchase as a means to an end; it brings a great deal of excitement." But the work is just beginning once the purchase is made.

"There is much that organizations can do before, during, and after an LMS purchase to ensure greater satisfaction and smoother implementation," says David E., who has worked with such organizations as Intuit and Sunrise Senior Living. "Elearning and blended learning are difficult to roll out, however, organizational readiness, including well-defined requirements, proper infrastructure, and understanding can make the task easier."

For many, the issue is support. "Many buyers encounter a lot of changes in vendor staffing as buyouts and mergers have affected the market over the past three to five years."

After being involved with two projects from RFP to implementation, Amy recommends clients think carefully about requirements before issuing an RFP. Avoid chasing features; rather, determine what you want the system to do, from a support perspective as well as a functionality perspective.

One major reason for customer dissatisfaction is the loss of focus on the end user, says David E. "Learning management systems need much more learner-friendly interfaces; but this is more of a configuration and training issue."

"**Configuration" is a key LMS buzzword**, and the task for which consultants are often engaged. Shivkumar L. is a Clarity Consultant working in New Brunswick, New Jersey, for the Americas division of pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca since December 2008. Shivkumar is responsible for configuring AZ's LMS to supply the necessary product training to more than 6,000 sales people in North America, and for new hires added at the rate of 150 to 200 per month.

Salespeople receive training based on their sales team assignments and requirements established by training managers. Offerings include web-based training, instructor-led courses, virtual sessions, and online assessments. Shivkumar has configured the LMS to meet the needs of the business, integrated it with other systems such as AZ's *Learning Dashboard*, and integrated it with *Metrics That Matter* by Knowledge

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Advisor to survey participants after learning is completed.

"Although I find the LMS very straightforward, AstraZeneca's satisfaction is hampered by a lack of tech savvy among the learners," Shivkumar says.

So, is the LMS as we know it dead? The market has plateaued, says David E. "There's been a big rush over the past five years to become elearning savvy. Now the big meal has been eaten, and most companies are satiated."

One such example is Sunrise Senior Living, which has engaged David E. through Clarity to implement its new LMS. Patti Mirallegro, Senior Director of Human Resources Organizational Development, describes the experience:

"We are transitioning from a home-grown system to the LMS we consider best in class. Sunrise really needs a learning solution that helps us deliver learning aligned with our business goals. We sought greater accountability and an improved learner experience. Sunrise, which employs 36,000 people in the United States and Canada, and 4,000 in the United Kingdom, hires for people skills and trains for technical skills.

Once we made our purchase decision, we realized we needed an LMS administrator. We had lost 40 percent of our team to [corporate] streamlining earlier this year. As we began to walk through the roadmap, the gaps became apparent. I can articulate the needs of the business, but not implement them.

David has experience in many relevant areas, including having worked with homegrown systems. He provides an excellent line of sight, and identifies risks that the business can present to the project team."

According to Mallon, Sunrise is following a popular trend: that of configuration over customization. That's smart because he says, "customization takes you off the upgrade path." He notes that he's been seeing more configurability built into the systems, but "going forward, even that won't cut it."

The bottom line today. The consultants all suggest that organizations increase their training for learners on how to use a new LMS. "The purpose of the LMS is to serve the learner, but many organizations treat the LMS purchase as a software project," says David E. "Learning management systems must deliver training to the user. If it does that well, the purchase will have longevity."

Bersin's Mallon, who has been watching the LMS marketplace for a decade, says vendors are doing better: "The biggest leap forward has been a greater focus on the end user, as developers embrace the consumerization of IT. We are finally starting to see a focus on learner-centricity and an improved experience."

What's next in the world of LMS?

Mallon has his eye on the horizon. "We will see an increase in the offering of the platform as a service — ERP in the cloud," he says. "Providers and an ecosystem of partners will attempt to meet customers' ideal end goal: total customization, all on the provider's equipment, all taken care of by the provider."

In the shorter term, Amy N. predicts increased deployments of mobile learning, especially for populations such as the one Shivkumar serves at AstraZeneca. "If you want to do mobile, then due diligence is all the more important," she says. "Ask potential vendors about their planned future enhancements. Request a roadmap for the next two to four years."

Amy also anticipates a shift in the next five years, as vendors integrate or merge with talent management systems. "Learning management may not be a standalone system, but rather a component of those systems."

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CCASTD Alliance Organizations

ACPI
Association of Career Professionals International: www.acpinternational.org

CCASTD
Chicago Chapter of the American Society for Training & Development: www.ccastd.org

CCF
Chicago Coach Federation: www.chicagocoaches.com

CISPI
Chicago Chapter of the International Society for Performance Improvement: www.cispi.com

CODIC
Chicago Organizational Development Institute Chapter: www.codic.us

NSA-IL
National Speakers Association-Illinois: www.nsa-il.org

ODNC
Organization Development Network-Chicago: www.odnetwork.org/odnc

STC
Society for Technical Communication: www.stc-chicago.org

Pulling it All Together: *Employee Engagement, Appreciation, and Learning*

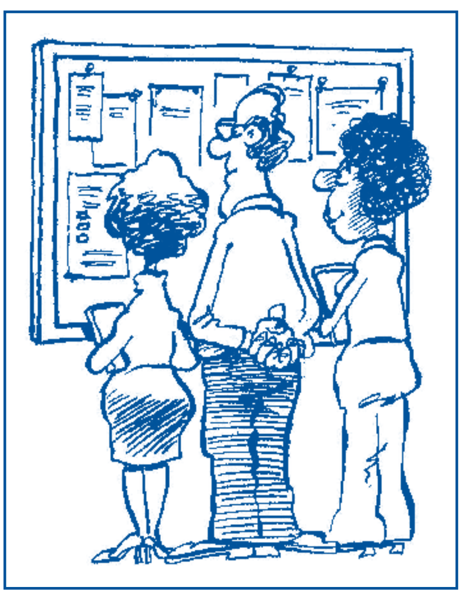
By Amy Krenzke

Being a student must come to an end sometime. I am entering my final phase of the MA in Educating Adults program at DePaul University. In our program, our final project is an Applied Inquiry Project (AIP). This AIP project brings together everything we have learned and applies it to a project that we believe will put a capstone on our learning in the MAEA program. I have chosen to focus my topic on Employee Engagement, Appreciation and Learning in the Workplace.

What does employee engagement really mean – especially to those of us in the T+D field? This is exactly what I will be analyzing through the research I conducted in my workplace and will be connecting with adult education theory. Employee engagement and appreciation are becoming part of the training and development world. Last year at ASTD's International Conference and Exposition (ICE) in Orlando, I attended numerous sessions asking learning leaders to question how they engage their employees. I attended the keynote speech by Mette Norgaard and Douglas Conant about leadership practice and touching base with employees frequently in what they call "TouchPoints". I attended a particularly informative session that made me decide on engagement as the topic of my AIP project. Blanchard discussed what he terms "Employee Work Passion" and 12 key factors to keep employees engaged on a regular basis.

Engagement and appreciation are becoming trends in the T+D field. I noticed at this year's ASTD ICE, there are numerous sessions on employee engagement and the connection to learning. And, let's not forget companies like Zappos.com or Google that are constantly engaging with innovative learning environments full of appreciation so that their employees create happy experiences for customers. *Organizations are coming to understand that for employees to be involved, they need to be engaged in their workplace on many levels ranging from career planning, to successful feedback/coaching programs, to simply being able to choose the music they listen to at their desk.* These are crucial and important aspects for a successful employee engagement program. The aspect I want to dig into with my AIP is how employee engagement and appreciation are connected in making the workplace a better learning environment.

This focus began for me as I started questioning my career during the second year at DePaul University in the MA in Educating Adults. I wanted to do more in my workplace towards training and development as I built my portfolio. I was doing this kind of work via CCASTD and the student interest group, and thought it was time to put what I was learning and my theories into practice in my workplace. I tried this first with my "Appreciation Board" which was a cheap and easy way to engage my employees on a regular basis. On our appreciation board we posted shout-outs – manager-to-associate, peer-to-peer, and had some fun! My favorite shout-out is when my big burly, bearded supervisor wrote a note to a fellow male associate that said, "Thank you for coming to work early and helping with stock because we really needed it. I love you!" It made me laugh as well as a few others, I'm sure.



When we began using the board, everyone had fun with it and we were engaged with each other's successes. It was not an employee review board or employee of the month program…it was on-going and frequent open conversation. I noticed employees became involved, were respectful of each other, laughed, and learned how to appreciate each other. I noticed our work environment was more fun, more engaging, upbeat, respectful, compassionate, and we were a more cohesive team.

Not all of the success was due to the Appreciation Board, but I think it was a very significant contributing factor. Because of this experiment, I realized how significant engaging employees can be and how appreciation can drive their learning experience. The combination of workplace engagement and appreciation made our metrics soar. Our Average Ticket Value (ATV), Conversion Rate (people in store who made a purchase), and Units per Transaction (UPT) all increased. I started considering how this contributed to my employees' learning. My staffs demonstrated this value by being happier, adapting more quickly to a situation, being engaged, and stretching their product knowledge. I noticed that when they were appreciated they felt valued and it decreased turnover.

When we had to move our store, the Appreciation Board went into storage and never came back out in its true form. I noticed that when it went away, we

Continued on next page

allowed ourselves to succumb to the stress of the move, we did not show appreciation and we were not as engaged as before.

We tried several programs to improve employee engagement, appreciation and learning in my workplace. There were successes and failures. For me, the big lesson was that I came to understand the importance of being a consistent and supportive manager to make the program successful. Furthermore, I saw that if employees felt engaged and appreciated they felt more valued therefore they were willing to keep learning and adapting in the workplace. These observations are driving me now to dig into my research and look at understanding the theory behind employee engagement, appreciation and how it connects to learning especially in the workplace.

When I chose this topic, I didn't feel wholeheartedly engaged as an employee and wanted to investigate what could be done to ensure a positive workplace learning environment for everyone. Therefore my mission – my passion, has become to better understand employee engagement and appreciation so that I can one day share these insights and demonstrate how the learning theory proves (or denies…I'm still working on it!) my theories. I'm excited to start this part of my educational journey and look forward to one day wrapping it all up into a neat and tidy research paper that will hopefully contribute to an exciting T+D career. Graduation here I come!

I encourage you to look at how you are using employee engagement and appreciation in your T+D environment. Appreciation does not have to be in the form of a monetary bonus – it can be as simple as a hand-written note. Engagement can be as simple as taking the time to touch-base with that intern to discuss her future career. With engagement and appreciation at your side you can build a culture of consistent, engaged learners who feel valued and will pass this attitude onto co-workers and customers alike.

Happy learning!

References:

Blanchard, Ken. (May 2011). *Creating an Engaging Work Environment for High Potential Employee*. Presentation at ASTD ICE, 2011.

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Upcoming CCASTD Programs

CCASTD's March Event

WHAT'S IN YOUR TOOL KIT? DEFINE YOUR VIRTUAL IMPACT.

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Speakers:
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Date: Thursday, March 15th
Time: Networking: 5:30pm
Dinner: 6:30pm
Presentation: 7:30pm

Location: The Meadows Club
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60008
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  - Bring a canned food item and receive an EXTRA raffle ticket for available raffle drawings on March 16, 2012.
    Bring in two canned goods....get two raffle tickets.

Check CCASTD.org for details and registration!

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