TRAINING

TODAY

CHICAGOLAND CHAPTER

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Letter From the Editor

Don't you love January? OK, let me clarify. Don't you love January because the holidays, as wonderful as they were, are now a fond memory and you're ready to jump back into work? It's time to move away from the food and back to the desk. I love this time of year because it's an opportunity to look back at what worked and to look ahead at new opportunities with a fresh perspective.

Looking back: During our CCASTD Board meeting in December, we looked back at 2008 and highlighted the numerous accomplishments of the Chapter. It was clear that many thanks go to our outgoing President, Ken Phillips, for his extraordinary dedication and leadership. His efforts have invigorated CCASTD's Board and membership. Ken leaves big shoes to fill.

Looking forward: Norma Kaplan, our new President will lead the way this year in her "will do" style. As one of her first orders of business, she's announced the 2009 Chapter Theme, *Members First*. This means that we will work even harder to focus on you, our members — to provide programs and resources to better serve your needs.

Here and now: This issue is full of insights, resources and tips to help you with common challenges that we face in the workplace learning arena. Specifically the articles this quarter cover:

• Study results on the impact of onboarding new employees
• Viable alternatives for communicating or training a geographically dispersed workforce
• Tips for conducting captivating international web conferences
• Language implications for a multicultural workforce
• New and not so new challenges we face in our industry
• Tips to help your writing be more effective.

New thoughts and ideas: As your new Editor, I embrace our theme of *Members First* and invite you to help me find articles and authors that are of interest to you. What do you want to learn about? What thoughts do you have for topics of articles? What new ideas or suggestions do you have about Training Today?

I welcome all of your input as I try to fill the role of my predecessor, Renie McClay. For those of you who know her, she also leaves big shoes to fill. For those of you who haven't yet had the opportunity to meet her, you should! Her energy and enthusiasm will leave a lasting impression.

I hope your New Year is full of new learning, new initiatives, excitement and good health.

Wishing you all the best in 2009!

Louann Swedberg
Drake Resource Group

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Study of New Employees Confirms Impact of Onboarding

by Robert Bilotti

Most employers and Human Resources professionals would agree that a new employee's first days with a company are critical, but just how big of an impact can an effective (or ineffective) onboarding program have? In other words…

How does the performance and behavior of new employees who feel this way…

- "It's difficult to describe what they did - you are thrown in, sink or swim."
- "I spent an hour filling out forms, sat in the lobby for two hours waiting for my new boss, who then told me to go meet with a few people. That was it!"
- "The entire first month was unstructured and lacking focus."
- "I still don't feel connected to the company or other employees."

Differ from new employees who feel this way…

- "There was a lot to learn. Luckily, there was a plan."
- "There was a great orientation guide which helped me through it."
- "The structure of the orientation bolstered my confidence in the company."
- "I knew exactly what was expected of me … this way I was able to fulfill those expectations."

To answer this question, Novita, a firm specializing in new employee development, conducted a study to determine how well companies are integrating, assimilating and empowering new employees.

The results (the above are actual quotes from the study) help demonstrate that a formal and well-developed new employee onboarding program not only impacts the new employee but the organization as a whole — both directly in terms of productivity, employee referrals, and retention, and indirectly, as far as employee satisfaction, culture, and safety. These can provide significant return on investment and contribute to both dollars gained and dollars saved.

Unlike most surveys of its kind, Novita surveyed new employees, not employers. Approximately 400 new employees participated in the study, from over 200 companies.

How are Today's Companies Onboarding New Employees?

From the data, it appears most companies' efforts are focused around what might be considered *traditional* activities, such as administrative, group or individual sessions with Human Resources, and a facilities tour. The majority of onboarding is taking place within the first week, with most programs containing social aspects, such as taking the new employee to lunch.

Information is mostly being provided in a print form. Somewhat surprising, technology (defined as online content, e-learning, webinars or email) is not currently playing a prominent role in onboarding.

A large number of new employees answered that they integrated into the company *on their own*. This is not necessarily a bad thing provided the company is set up for what we call *self-service onboarding*.

The survey also indicated that many new employees consider their manager and new co-workers chief sources of information. Again, not a bad thing. The question to ask is are your managers and other employees properly trained, and providing consistent, accurate information?

How Effectively are New Employees Being Onboarded?

When asked to rate their overall onboarding experience, the results resembled a bell curve, peaking at a "neutral" response - a strong indication of room for improvement.

Why the dissatisfaction? According to the results, onboarding in a majority of companies is an "informal" process, rather than a defined plan. Managers received the lowest marks of the survey, with 54% of respondents disagreeing with the statement: "My manager knew the proper way to orient me." Given the aforementioned significance of managers' involvement in onboarding, this presents one of the biggest opportunities for improvement and impact.

On a positive note, respondents felt their companies are effectively supporting them and responding to their needs. When asked how they felt after the onboarding period, half indicated they are satisfied with their decision to join the company, though "disorganized" was the top answer in terms of their impression of the company. Some even revealed that they quit or were considering leaving the company based on events that began during onboarding (*"After 8 months, I am ready to leave due to the lack of management that began from the beginning."; "After my experience, I decided to resign after 9 months."*)

What's the Impact of an Effective Onboarding Program?

The significance of the data comes into focus when you begin to compare the new employees from companies with a highly-rated onboarding program versus those with a poorly-rated program. The chart illustrates just how far-reaching and considerable is the effect. Most people assume the impact of onboarding is felt only by the new employee, but it touches everyone: tenured employees, managers, executives. For example, counter-productivity, which is how a new employee can negatively affect others can potentially upset things at all levels.

See Diagram 1, opposite page

In terms of R.O.I. (return on investment), the impact can be quantified by the dollar value of new employees achieving greater productivity, choosing to remain at the company, committing fewer errors, violations and accidents, and referring other candidates – not to mention innovation. Think beyond productivity in terms of the return. Think about the financial outcome of fewer accidents, fewer lawsuits, less calls to the company's help desk, more referrals, higher

Diagram 1

New employees of companies with a highly-rated onboarding program are...	
Productivity:	59% more likely to achieve 61 – 100% productivity during the onboarding period.
Time to Productivity:	15% more likely to achieve 100% productivity within three months.
Satisfaction:	115% more likely to feel satisfied with their decision to join the company.
Retention:	23% more likely to make the decision to remain at the company within six months.
Employee Referrals:	58% more likely to recommend the company to a friend or colleague looking for a job.
Innovation:	85% more likely to contribute their ideas for improvements.
Compliance:	52% more likely to understand the desired conduct of an employee.
Safety:	107% more likely to know what to do in case of an emergency, and other security information.
Loyalty:	48% more likely to feel a strong sense of commitment to help the company be successful.
Culture:	95% more likely to feel part of a team working towards a common goal.
Learning:	207% more likely to feel the company was committed to their learning and development.
Impression:	481% / 51% / 65% more likely to have an impression of the company as organized / dynamic / caring.

retention, even one more great idea, and you really start to see the ripple effect that onboarding has.

What does an effective onboarding program look like?

Companies and new employees are so different. But as this survey suggests, there are common features that the highly-rated — and therefore highly impactful — programs share. Things such as:

- A defined plan and formal process.
- A manager trained in the proper way to orient a new employee.
- A workspace properly configured for the new employee to begin working immediately.
- The ability for the new employee to find answers as well as locate tools and resources on his or her own.
- Opportunities for socialization.
- A company responsive to the new employee's needs.
- Learning from others (knowledge sharing).

Such features offer a blueprint to a successful program, but as far as the components upon which to build your program, the data did not reveal any *magic pill*. Many highly-rated programs had the same set of components as poorly-rated programs. Quality is the factor. You may have a New Employee Guide, but if it doesn't answer the new employee's questions, it's not effective.

The objectives you set for your onboarding program and your employees' needs and preferences should lead you to the appropriate components to include. The data revealed that certain components led to different "types" of impact. Some scored higher for retention, while others increased employee referrals. Above all, the data indicates there is no one solution or tool or even technology that addresses all needs or is a "one size fits all" onboarding solution. Onboarding may seem simple, but if your company numbers even a hundred, to do it right is a complicated and involved process involving large amounts of information and numerous people within different parts of the company — it is truly cross-functional.

First Steps to Improved Onboarding

Like any successful initiative, it begins with a comprehensive analysis. *Smile sheets* at the end of the first day won't suffice. Because of a disjointed effort, many companies don't even know what's being done for new employees. We deal with clients all the time where HR is doing one thing, IT is doing another, training has their own thing going on, and the manager isn't doing anything.

This is one of the benefits of having outside assistance. An outsider can bring all these people together, and get them thinking strategically and objectively. What's more, improving onboarding is a time-consuming effort usually lumped onto a department's already full plate and limited headcount. Like everything, it comes down to how much is your time worth?

With all the research out there including this study, it surprises me how onboarding continues to be regarded in organizations – like an afterthought or a nice to have. The results of this study could help to demonstrate that an effective onboarding program is a mission-critical strategic goal, and that any investment in your new employee onboarding returns that investment many times over.

For more information or to request a copy of the executive summary report, contact info@novitaunique.com.

About Novita: Novita's goal is to "accelerate new employee development" and offers services and programs addressing the needs of all those involved in new employee onboarding from "both sides of the desk", including services targeted to assist Human Resources and T&D, training for managers, and workshops for new employees looking to make an impact of their own. Visit www.novitaunique.com to learn more.

Robert Bilotti is Principal Partner of Novita, and has previously served as Training Manager for a consumer packaged goods company. With an extensive background in instructional design, training strategy and organizational development, he is a requested speaker on the subject of new employee productivity, as well as manager and employee development.

A Workshop, Webinar or What?

by Renie McClay
*Reprinted with permission from **The Essential Guide to Training Global Audiences,** published by Pfeiffer.*

There are a number of challenges organizations face when rolling out company-wide initiatives across the globe. Cost, culture, language, and technology are a few of the major considerations everyone must face. Sending a message from the president to all employees around the world isn't hard, but communicating it in a way that is consistently understood is where things get troublesome. Imagine the challenges facing multinational organizations in rolling out a two day workshop about Effective Communication or one on Conducting Effective Performance Reviews. Or, how should new employees get up to speed on the company and learn about the products? With all of the technology, delivery methods and cultural implications, how does one determine the best way to accomplish the organization's goals for learning and development?

This article takes a look at some of the different ways to accomplish these goals as well as some of the advantages and disadvantages for each. We'll look at the following options:

- Conduct a face to face workshop there (where the participants work)
- Conduct a face to face workshop here (where the headquarter is located)
- Train the Trainer
- Master Trainer simultaneous workshops
- Virtual Training

FACE TO FACE WORKSHOP THERE

In this option, facilitators (either internal employees or contractors) go on the road and take the workshop to their audiences around the globe.

Advantages

- Content can be customized and adapted to meet the needs of different audiences and cultures
- Facilitators can pick up on learning transfer success and react/adjust as needed on the fly
- Traveling to the various locations helps to learn about customers and/or audience culture
- Employees feel valued because they are getting the same treatment as corporate does, but on their own turf
- Getting to know leaders and people from corporate can help instill loyalty, foster shared understanding, and create the desired culture
- Typically there may be more learning and skills transfer and team building in a workshop versus other methods
- Contractors can be hired if internal resources are an issue or aren't available to do the work

Disadvantages

- Facilitators may encounter inconsistent facility or technology at the various locations which makes it hard for consistent delivery of content
- Employees attending training in their office facility may be distracted with emails, phone calls and other job responsibilities
- Travel takes facilitators and leaders out of their office which could impact other work
- Language barriers or culture differences may affect the delivery of content
- Financial costs of travel abroad are high
- Travel, preparation and repeated facilitation takes its toll on facilitators

FACE-TO-FACE WORKSHOP HERE

This option brings employees to the corporate headquarters location to participate in the face to face workshop.

Advantages

- The employees feel valued by being brought to "corporate"
- Being at the corporate location is a great opportunity to learn or reinforce the culture of the company
- Employee relationship building with corporate staff is likely to occur. This helps bridge the "geographic gap."
- Typically there may be more learning and skills transfer and team building in a workshop versus other methods (for skill-based or relationship-based learning content)

Disadvantages

- Financial costs of employee travel may be cost-prohibitive depending on the size of the company and number of employees attending the workshop
- Need to factor in the lead time, expense and potential restrictions for obtaining passports/visas required for travel
- Employees travel takes them out of their office which could impact other work
- Fatigue factor (such as jetlag) or culture shock could affect learners
- Participants could experience language barriers even when everyone speaks English

TRAIN THE TRAINER

This scenario has several options. One would be for Master Trainers (experts on the workshop and in training trainers) to travel to train additional facilitators on the content and in the techniques needed to actually facilitate the workshop.

Another variation includes facilitators (perhaps managers or subject matter experts) who will be facilitating the workshop coming to the corporate headquarters and attending a Train the Trainer session to learn the content and facilitation techniques.

A third variation of this option would be to train independent facilitators and have them partner with employees in the country to roll out the workshop. The independent facilitator would most likely be an expert in the content, while the in country co-facilitator would be an expert in the company and the culture. Working together, this team could support each other to deliver a successful workshop.

Advantages

- More people will know the content and can help spread the word
- Content can be localized and customized to better meet the needs of the learners
- With more facilitators and people versed in the content, the odds of having champions and follow up for the initiative/training is greater
- May be the most cost effective in terms of time and money (versus sending all employees to another country to take the

training or having a few corporate facilitators trying to do all the workshops abroad)
- Roll out could be completed in a shorter timeframe with more people trained to deliver it

Disadvantages
- Quality and consistency may be reduced when newly trained facilitators are delivering around the globe
- Management support and follow-up may reduced unless leaders voice and show support
- The newly trained facilitators will likely not be dedicated resources, so mind share and skills may be an issue

Yet another variation of the Train the Trainer includes a Master Trainer/Satellite option. In this case, a Master Trainer would be in one location and there could be several groups in attendance around the world. For an example, the Master Trainer is located in New York and there are groups of employees in India ready to be trained (let's say in Pune, Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi and Mumbai). Each satellite meeting room with a facilitator is connected to the Master Trainer via video conference or web cast. The Master Trainer opens the session, greets participants and presents the first module of content. When an assignment is given, the local facilitators take over and lead the group through the assignment. When the assignment is complete, the entire group reconvenes and the local facilitators offer some comments, insights or questions from their group. The Master Trainer handles the questions, addresses the comments and moves onto the next module. This approach continues for the duration of the training. This method works well when the organization needs a level of continuity in the training.

What about logistics? The New Yorker will likely start the session at 8:00 p.m. eastern

time so the learners in India can participate during their work day. If this is an eight hour workshop, consider breaking it up into four or five segments to give participants and facilitators time to take a break.

What about getting the facilitators in synch? The local facilitators need to be trained on the content, what to expect and their roles during the session. As you guessed, this can be done with the Master Trainer presenting the material in advance to facilitator groups across one country or many countries. Be sure to account for differing time zones when planning this facilitator preparation session.

VIRTUAL TRAINING
This option could include presenting content via live or recorded webcasts, and/or e-learning.

Advantages
- Cost efficient in that e-learning typically saves money with large audiences as compared to incurring travel costs for participants
- Webcasts can be recorded and repeated by the same or different learner audiences
- Electronic media events can reach greater audiences for each event
- This delivery method is convenient for all involved (no travel required)
- Significant time advantage for participants due to not having to travel

Disadvantages
- Company's values and culture may not be passed along as easily as during face to face training delivery methods
- Retention and learning transfer may be compromised (particularly for skills training unless practice exercises are included)
- To accommodate differing time zones, the Master Trainer may need to work during

unusual hours if facilitating a live webinar
- The content may not be sensitized and localized for varied cultures, unless different versions are created.
- Technology challenges could be daunting
- Not all learning styles/learners respond best to virtual training methods

This is just a very quick review of some methods and some of their strengths and weaknesses. It is not intended to be complete, but is intended to help you think about considerations when designing learning events for global audiences. Each of these options has on its own has a particular strength and can be combined with other methods to provide a strong blended learning event. When it comes time to decide on a method, look to the objectives of the learning event to help choose the best option. Keep in mind there are no wrong choices. The key is, whatever choice you make, do it well!

Renie McClay is a learning consultant who trains globally and is passionate about developing people. She spent 20 years at Kraft Foods in sales, account management, and sales training and has managed training groups for 3 different Fortune 500 companies.

Renie has facilitated training in person and via webcasts for corporate, technical, non-profit, and university audiences in Ghana, Europe, Asia, Australia, India, and North America. She hosted a bi-monthly talk show for North American, Latin American, and Asian audiences and managed the translation of sales and marketing materials for Asia and Latin America.

She is the co-author of **The Essential Guide to Training Global Audiences***. This resource is designed to help presenters and trainers when they are facilitating to a global audience for the first time. She is also the editor of* **Sales Training Solutions,** *a resource written by 11 different sales trainers to help develop and implement successful sales training. She can be contacted at rmcclay@inspiredtolearn.net.*

Tips for Conducting Captivating, International, Web-Based Communications

by Sheri Jeavons

If you have to host webinars or web-based meetings with an international audience, you are well aware of the challenges this medium presents. While it allows people from around the world to instantly connect and share information, communicating virtually creates a disconnect that is sometimes difficult to overcome.

You may have tried using this technology but feel as though it isn't very effective. Keeping everyone engaged and on the same page, especially for an extended period of time, can prove challenging even for the most seasoned presenter. No worries! The following tips can help you over this hump.

To hold a successful webinar or web-based meeting, you need to adjust your communication style. Acting as though you are in a face-to-face meeting does not work! The following tips will help ensure your audience is on board, paying attention and getting the most from your web-based communication.

1. **Set guidelines for focused participation.** Within the first two minutes of your communication, tell the audience how the meeting will go and what you expect from them. Also state the topics you will cover and how much time you plan to spend on each. This will help people focus their attention on the information that is most important to them. A lack of guidance and structure makes it easy for participants to tune out.

   It may seem like common sense, but ask participants to close their e-mail and any applications that won't be needed during the call so they won't be tempted to work on other things. Explain that you will frequently ask for clarification, feedback and use polls to keep them involved in the meeting.

2. **Timing is everything.** Because of the physical disconnect, paying attention for extended periods of time becomes very challenging. A good rule of thumb is to keep your meetings to 30-45 minutes. It is better to conduct three 30 minute meetings than one 90 minute meeting. If you are communicating with individuals from different countries, be sure to consider time zones as well.

   Working in shorter time increments means you'll need to change the way you communicate. The best way to increase comprehension is to chunk your information into short segments.

3. **Adjust your delivery style — press your own "Pause" button.** Since you may be dealing with language barriers, you will want to insert more pauses to help with comprehension. When you advance each slide, be sure to pause for 2-3 seconds allowing everyone time to silently read the slide. Pause at the end of a key point or sentence. Pause also when you have explained something challenging, and then ask if anyone wants you to repeat what you just said.

   Another way you can keep your audience engaged is by stating your actions and explaining what you are doing as you do it. For example, if you are going to use video, tell your attendees, "Now I'm going to turn on the video feed. Click on your video panel to see me live."

4. **Adjust your PowerPoint® slides.** When delivering a web-based meeting or webinar, your PowerPoint slides are often the only thing your attendees see. Therefore, the slides must be simple, visually appealing and easy to follow.

   To maintain attendees' attention, consider changing slides every 60-90 seconds. This means you'll need more slides than in a face-to-face meeting. Each time you advance a slide, state the topic of the slide, list the highlights of the topic, then go into detail.

5. **Interact every few slides**. Try to incorporate some form of audience interaction every few slides. Audience interaction tools will vary depending on your software, but common tools include polls, questions, chat and emoticons. Ask them to use the emoticon buttons or to check yes or no to ask you to answer questions. You can also use these tools to ask attendees how you're doing. Do they want you to go slower? Do they have questions? Make it a habit to ask if things need to be repeated. The bottom line: learn about the tools available and make the most of them.

6. **Use your vocal energy to keep the audience interested.** Your voice will be stronger and have more energy if you stand while presenting your webinar. To keep your energy up you will want to keep your hands free when you're communicating. The more your body gets involved, the more energized your voice will be. If possible, have someone in the room with you while delivering the webinar. This creates live interaction and helps keep your energy high.

   As you present, try to have a verbal connection with your participants. Use their names and include them in examples. After you emphasize a key point, take a breath and then be silent. Allow people time to process your information. Whatever you do, don't use a speaker phone (it makes your voice sound weak), and don't "wing it." Webinars are more like formal presentations than meetings, so you may need to practice delivering your content once or twice before the actual webinar. I also recommend that you record yourself and practice creating excitement in your voice.

7. **Review. Review. Review.** At the end of each topic and at the end of the whole meeting, review what needs to happen next. Be specific in your requests. Outline what individuals need to do and give deadlines. Everyone is overwhelmed with work and if there is no deadline assigned, chances are it won't get done. If possible open the phone lines and have people state what they believe they need to do next. Verbally declaring their responsibility will determine if they were listening.

Sheri Jeavons is known as the Virtual Communications Coach. She is the founder of Power Presentations, Inc., a company that specializes in presentation and communication skill training programs and products. A recognized expert in her field, Sheri has successfully trained more than 10,000 professionals across America. She was selected as one of the Top Ten Women Business Owners by the National Association of Women Business Owners and received the Working Woman Magazine Entrepreneurial Excellence Award. To learn more about Power Presentations' TOP Mastery™ Programs and Products, including the new Webinars that Wow™ and Web Meetings that Wow™ classroom and virtual training programs, visit www.power-presentations.com.

Language in the Workplace:
Cross the Communication Divide with Job-Specific Language Training

by Luciana Tiberio
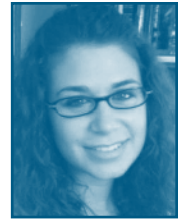
With 80% of the recent growth in the Chicagoland area due to the increase in the Latino population, there are few industries unaffected by the challenges of managing a multicultural workforce. There will be even fewer untouched industries in the future.

New projections show the US Latino population is expected to **triple** by 2050, representing about one-third of the total US population. Additionally, the foreign-born population will increase significantly. With one of two new US workers born in other countries, these are statistics your company cannot afford to ignore. Onsite, workplace-specific language training can help leverage the skills and talents of your workers.

Why should I invest in English language training for my employees?
Safety. It's important that your employees are able to communicate with you and your staff. A language and culture barrier may not simply be a cause of frustration but can also seriously affect safety. Without a good understanding of English, it can be difficult, if not impossible, for employees to read warning labels and signs and understand safety requirements.

According to an OSHA study, one in four accidents in the workplace are attributed to a language barrier. How do your employees report accidents if they can't speak English – but more importantly, how can you prevent them?

Opportunity & Productivity. Many of your Spanish-speaking employees have had limited access to formal education. This, combined with family and second job commitments, means that attending English classes at a community college is not always feasible, and even if they did, they wouldn't get the job-specific language they need.

By bringing job-specific English training onsite, employees learn in a familiar and safe setting where they can practice skills with, help and encourage their peers. It also allows them the opportunity to learn key vocabulary and phrases that help them do their jobs better, provide better customer service and increase their promotability.

Why should I also invest in Spanish training for my staff?
Leadership. It's difficult and intimidating to learn a new language, and one of the best ways to encourage your employees to use their English is by learning some Spanish. The best way to lead is by example. If you're willing to learn a few new phrases and risk making mistakes, your employees will be more willing to do the same. It also demonstrates respect for them and their heritage and shows them that you value them as people, not just as workers. Engaging your employees on a personal level builds trust and mutual respect.

How does this help improve my bottom line?
Engagement. In and of itself, improving workplace safety saves time and money in the long run, and by encouraging communication, mutual respect and employee trust you improve the overall work environment. Study after study shows that an engaged workforce is a productive and happy workforce, and when you improve morale you also improve company loyalty. Engaging your employees through language training also helps prevent turnover. Conservative estimates cite the cost for replacing one employee as the equivalent of one-third of that employee's salary, not to mention the potential frustration and loss of productivity that comes with having to train a new person.

As the Latino population trends continue to increase, companies that provide proactive opportunities for their employees and learn to leverage their pool of talented Latino employees will be best-positioned to succeed.

Luciana Tiberio is the Program Manager for Workforce Language Services. For more information or questions regarding workplace language programs email Luciana@workforcelang.com or call 773.292.5500.

New and Not So New Challenges in the Training Industry

by Elizabeth Mitchell

In the fields of Training and Organizational Development there are always new trends emerging, and business leaders are always looking for the next best thing. Along with new trends come some new challenges. But more often than not, we see variations of the same old challenges the industry has faced for years.

This article focuses on both new and existing challenges in the Training and Organizational Development world, highlighting some helpful methods used to overcome them. As background for this article, several people who hold both internal and external consulting positions in the Training and OD industry were interviewed.

New Technology Platforms and Pressure to use Online or Web-based Training: Yes, it's true that technology often makes our lives easier. Reduced paperwork, faster turn-around and increased capacity are some ways that technology has contributed positively to the workplace. However, technology isn't always the instant solution it is expected to be. Often when a training need arises, business leaders tend to seek an online or web-based solution believing that it will be time and cost effective. The issue here is that web-based or online training is not the best solution for every training need. Online training platforms tend to be less time consuming for both the trainer and the participant; however, as we all know, participant learning won't be maximized if online solutions are used in the wrong situation.

As experts in the area of training development and design, it is our responsibility to educate our clients or internal customers as to the best solution for their training needs. This includes presenting the best option for training delivery and offering research and/or experience to back up these recommendations. In the business world decisions are typically guided by dollars, so make it clear that online training (like any other form of training), when used improperly, can be a waste of resources. A quicker completion time, or lower costs do not mean the desired results will be delivered.

Communication and Marketing of Learning and Development Initiatives: One of the notorious problems that Training and OD departments face is how to market their training materials and encourage people to use them. A simple email message appears to be a sufficient solution; but who has time to read long, detailed emails? It's even more difficult to find time to review new materials then attend training events that teach how to use new resources. So, how do we get the word out about the great new products and courses that we worked so hard to develop?

The answer is simpler than one might think: involve the potential audience in the development of the product. When you invite your audience to participate in the development of your product, you build rapport with the people involved. And guess what, word of mouth still remains the strongest, most pervasive marketing tool. Some ways to involve your audience in the development of products are:

- Use them as Subject Matter Experts in interviews or focus groups
- Delegate portions of the project to your audience
- Ask for their feedback at different stages in development.

People will feel that they had a hand in the creation of the product and will share that information with co-workers. Before you know it, you'll have people asking about the release date of information or training programs!

OK, you may be skeptical of the "word of mouth" solution if you work in a large organization, but I contend that it is still your best option. The key in this situation is to have support from top executives, and use the top-down approach in your communication plan. Be sure that you have leaders in the organization on board with your initiatives and ask them to play a part in the marketing effort to middle managers. You can then hold middle managers accountable for communicating this information to the rest of the organization.

Encouraging Knowledge Sharing: Knowledge sharing is the transferring of important organizational or job specific knowledge from one member of the company to others. Transferring this knowledge is becoming increasingly urgent with the escalating numbers of retirees in today's workforce, not to mention downsizing efforts. The task of developing an effective strategy for knowledge sharing often falls in our hands, so how can we make this happen throughout the organization?

It is important to recognize that knowledge sharing occurs on both a formal and informal basis, and should be constant within organizations. Job aids are a great way to share formal knowledge. However, how do you ensure that the intricacies associated with people's jobs are transferred? One way is to foster an environment of constant communication. Some ways to do this include:

- Holding question and answer sessions with leaders in the organization
- Sending out newsletters on a regular basis
- Rewarding people who take the time to train their co-workers
- Publicly reinforcing knowledge sharing behavior
- Welcoming ideas regarding different ways to encourage continuous knowledge sharing
- Getting involved with formal knowledge sharing efforts

Time and Availability of SMEs, Participants, and Trainers: Time is one of the most crucial issues facing Training and OD professionals today and it is by no means a new issue. This is probably the number one challenge voiced by the experts I interviewed. (As you may have noticed, time is an underlying issue in all of the challenges discussed above.) It's very difficult for all parties involved in the development and success of Training and OD efforts to find

the time to develop and deliver quality initiatives. Trainers are often given unrealistic timetables for deliverables, SMEs are unavailable due to time constraints, and, once the training is developed people don't have the time to attend. The result is typically a less than effective training program. Sound familiar?

We can't squeeze more hours into a day, so we need to go to Plan B. Since we are the experienced experts in the development, design, and delivery of training it's imperative that we impose our expertise to get the necessary resources. So often this is done by answering that important question, "What's in it for me?" Give people the WIIFMs that that make a difference in their work lives. Make the link between effective training programs and the benefits to them. Then let them know the time required to get the results that they desire. This is a great way to get people to prioritize and find time. In addition to letting people see how they are helping themselves by dedicating time to training initiatives, it is a good idea to reward those who contribute on a regular basis. Rewarding these behaviors shows that these initiatives are a priority in the organization and that they are supported by upper level executives.

These are not the only challenges that face today's Training and Organizational Development professionals; however, these are the key themes found both in my research and my professional experience. Hopefully this article offered some new solutions to old challenges and some encouragement that we all face similar challenges regardless of the technology, organization or training initiative.

Elizabeth received her Bachelor's degree from Ohio University with a major in Psychology and minor in Business. She moved on to earn her Master's in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from The Chicago School of Professional Psychology in May, 2006. Since that time she has worked as a Training and Development Analyst and Instructional Designer. Some of her responsibilities in these roles have included recruiting, performance management, curriculum development, new employee orientation and on-boarding, leadership development, training evaluation, and training development and design.

How to Get a Gig:
Highlights of the Independent Consultant Forum

by Ken Phillips

If you're an independent consultant, have you ever wondered what corporate training managers look for when hiring a consultant? Or would you like to know how corporate training managers prefer to be contacted when you're trying to get an appointment?

If you attended the Independent Consultant Forum meeting on Thursday evening, December 11th, you would know the answers to these and other similar questions.

The program, a panel discussion comprised of three corporate training managers, the founder and CEO of a training company and a representative from a local university that employs independent consultants, answered questions on how to navigate the uncertain road of getting a consulting gig. Some of the questions the panel addressed were: "What types of engagements do they hire independent consultants to perform?" "What qualities do they look for when hiring an independent consultant?" "What activities do they pay for (e.g. preparation, design, delivery, expenses, etc.)?" "How do they want to be invoiced?" and "How do they prefer to be contacted?"

Here are the highlights of the valuable information shared by the panel members in their responses:

- Roles the panel members hire independent consultants to perform include: facilitators, writers, graphic designers, instructional designers (e-learning and classroom), and executive coaches.
- Several panel members also mentioned that they often hire independent consultants to deliver training to "special audiences" such as director level employees and above.
- Particular qualities the panel members look for when hiring an independent consultant include: specific business or industry experience, clear communication skills, a good fit with the organization's culture and professional references or work samples. The panelists also mentioned that they look for consultants who are good listeners, ask thoughtful questions and will admit there if there isn't a good fit. They pointed out that this shows integrity and honesty, and demonstrates that the consultant wants what is best for the client.

- When asked about the value of ASTD's Certified Professional in Learning and Performance (CPLP) credential, all of the panel members agreed that while not having it wouldn't be a "deal breaker," having the credential shows that the consultant is interested in investing in him/herself and this was seen as a plus.
- A big "no-no" mentioned by the panel was billing for work that was outside the scope of the project, without first discussing the situation with the client. The clear message was: "No surprises."
- When it came to the preferred method of contact, the panel was split. Some preferred the initial contact to be through email while others liked receiving a phone call. However, in both cases, respecting the client's time was a must.
- The panel identified two specific needs where they would be looking for consulting help in 2009. Those include conducting a training needs analysis and measuring the effectiveness of corporate training initiatives.

Session evaluations indicated that the program "hit the mark" with those consultants in attendance and that there was a clear need to do more programs like this in 2009. Ken Phillips, the 2008 Chicagoland Chapter president, moderated the discussion. At the conclusion of the session he announced that he was committed to organizing four Independent Consultant Forum meetings in 2009. More specific information about topics and dates will be distributed after the first of the year. If you would like to help organize these programs, contact Ken at: Ken@phillipsassociates.com or 647-231-6068.

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Writing Tip:
Use a Forecasting Subject Line

by Stu Tanquist

PRODUCTIVITY TIP

When you want your emails to get things done, begin with a forecasting subject line. This simple step will turn your readers from passive to active. It often determines whether your email gets read or not.

FORECAST THE BOTTOM LINE OF YOUR EMAIL IN THE SUBJECT LINE

Forecasting subject lines tell the reader what you're going to tell them. In other words, they forecast the business application of your email — they tell readers how your email affects them.

Effective subject lines offer more than a general topic description. Assume for a moment that you work in human resources. Which of the following is more likely to pique your interest, a topic subject line or a forecasting subject line?

1. "Benefits Plan"
2. "Recommendation for Enhancing Our Benefits Plan"

THE POWER OF FORECASTING SUBJECT LINES

People are naturally curious. Consider the previous example. By disclosing the business application of the email, readers will wonder, "What is the recommendation? How could the benefit plan be enhanced?" These questions grab the reader's attention and turn them from passive to active.

EXAMPLES OF FORECASTING

SUBJECT LINES

Use the following subject line openers to enhance reader interest:

- Review of...
- Request for...
- Proper Handling of...
- Recommended Use of...
- Instructions for...
- Comments about...

To further increase productivity, follow these four guidelines for writing forecasting subject lines:

1. Repeat key words from paragraph 1
2. Write this last — after a rough draft is completed
3. Avoid using a full sentence or a question
4. Strive for no more than 50 characters

A SMALL STEP THAT OFFERS BIG RESULTS

Forecasting subject lines are a simple yet powerful tool for *Writing to Get Things Done*. By stating the business application of your message in the subject line, you will entice your readers to learn more and take action. Consistently follow this simple tip and watch your productivity grow.

Stu Tanquist served on the board of the third largest ASTD chapter for four years and authored two best selling Info-Lines. He teaches employees how to meet important deadlines and keep projects on target by writing emails that get things done.

Stu can be reached at www.BerryWritingGroup.com or 612-799-1686.

CHICAGOLAND CHAPTER

ASTD

WORKPLACE LEARNING & PERFORMANCE

Date: Wednesday, January 21st
Time: 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM
Place: Elephant & Castle
111 West Adams
Chicago
(Between Clark and LaSalle on Adams)

State of the Chapter Meeting

Join us for information and networking. Lunch will be provided.

For more information and to register, visit www.ccastd.org

Cost: *Members $30*
Non-member $40
Student $20
Late registration (after 1/15) add $5

Save The Date

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International Coaching Federation of Chicago: www.chicagocoaches.com

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

ODNC

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

SHRP

Society for Human Resource Professionals (Chicago Chapter of SHRM): www.shrp.org

SITE

Society of Insurance Trainers & Educators: www.insurancetrainers.org

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