

Keeping Up With the Pace of Change

Informal learning will help employees survive in the future workplace. | BY JAY CROSS



iStockphoto.com

Three out of four business leaders I talk with confide that they don't believe their current approach to training will enable their workers to be prepared for the future workplace. They are so busy chopping down trees that they don't take the time to sharpen their axes.

In these volatile, accelerating times, the organization that fails to do a great job of helping its people keep up with the pace of change will not survive the decade.

Increasing the training budget is not going to increase the odds of survival or help the bottom line. What will is collaboration and self-directed learning. It's about making communication simple, and partnering with customers and suppliers. Generally, it's all about getting out of people's way so they can learn what they need to know to excel in their work.

Enough long sentences. Take a look at these industrial-age problems. Check those that apply.

SUBSTANDARD REVENUE

- ✓ Sales declining, customers postponing buying decisions
- ✓ Salesforce cannot express benefits of new products
- ✓ Sellers unaware of industry conditions and competition
- ✓ Friction in relationships with distributors
- ✓ Our partners are not well informed
- ✓ Sales and marketing on different planets
- ✓ Arms-length relationships with customers

DEFICIENT SERVICE

- ✓ Response time to customers is substandard
- ✓ After-sales inquiries are bogging down our call centers
- ✓ 800 numbers and phone trees are driving customers away
- ✓ Service is inconvenient for customers, not 24/7
- ✓ We don't learn from our customers
- ✓ We are not building customer loyalty
- ✓ Customer and prospects are confused, frustrated



Share

Subscribe

Feedback

Print

< PREVIOUS

From the CEO

Feature

LX View

Hot Topic

Inside Story

Ideasphere

Mustn't Miss

Travel

Resources

About ASTD

NEXT >

10.07 // Hot Topic *Continued*

INEFFICIENCY AND BUREAUCRACY

- ✓ Deluged by internal email
- ✓ Can't find the right person in a hurry
- ✓ People don't know who knows what
- ✓ Can't touch the right information when you need it
- ✓ Project coordination is tedious and things fall through the cracks
- ✓ Re-invention of the same documents and processes over and over
- ✓ Departments squabble more often than they collaborate
- ✓ Don't learn from the people who join us from competitors
- ✓ Execs can't get a read of progress or lack thereof
- ✓ Documentation is dated, versions confuse

UNENTHUSIASTIC, SLUGGISH STAFF

- ✓ Recruiting is harder than ever
- ✓ Some people do the minimum to get by
- ✓ People are not innovators and don't keep up
- ✓ Know-how is walking out the door due to retirement and turnover

- ✓ People are glum because of the economy, an industry slump, whatever
- ✓ Turnover is too high
- ✓ When good people leave, we never see or hear from them again
- ✓ No time for experimentation or prototyping

UNDERDEVELOPED ORGANIZATION

- ✓ Difficult to collaborate inside the corporate firewall
- ✓ Difficult to collaborate outside the corporate firewall
- ✓ People prefer to work solo rather than on teams
- ✓ New hires take too long to become productive
- ✓ Analysis paralysis
- ✓ "Wait and see" attitude equals missed opportunities
- ✓ Culture clash, as if we are two organizations with different priorities

SUB-OPTIMAL EXECUTION

- ✓ Not everyone is on the same page
- ✓ Our people don't know our history, values, and culture

- ✓ We are set in our ways, reluctant to change
- ✓ Not moving fast enough to stay ahead of competitors
- ✓ Functional silos thwart process improvement
- ✓ Still acting like two separate organizations long after a merger
- ✓ Hard to determine where we are as an organization
- ✓ Teams don't talk about trends and forces that drive our business
- ✓ Don't reflect on the lessons of our successes and failures
- ✓ Don't take advantage of our collective intelligence

NOT LEARNING

- ✓ We are falling behind
- ✓ Not prepared for onslaught of digital natives
- ✓ Training can't keep pace with the business
- ✓ Learning systems are outgrowth of classroom
- ✓ Training administration, creation, and delivery cost too much
- ✓ Managers hoard information

How many of these describe your organization?

SOLUTIONS FROM WITHIN AND OUTSIDE

Many companies have recognized some of these problems in their organizations and found solutions to these age-old issues.

At Intel, a technology enthusiast thought it would be cool to have an in-house Wikipedia. He downloaded free wiki software and put it on the company intranet last year. Now "Intelpedia" has 5,000 pages of content, has racked up 13.5 million page-views, and is the go-to spot for information once stashed in five corporate silos.

Using blogs and wikis, T. Rowe Price captured answers to questions asked of 1,500 temporary workers during tax season. This improved the quality of subsequent answers and shaved two minutes off the average customer phone call, which resulted in a savings of more than \$10 million.

Investment bank Kleinwort Dresdner eliminated half of its internal email by replacing multiple messages about a topic with a single, shared copy.

Companies have found ways to use informal learning solutions to solve these industrial-age problems. How will you solve them?

Jay Cross is a champion of informal learning, web 2.0, and systems thinking. His calling is to change the world by helping people improve their performance on the job and satisfaction in life, or so says his website. Visit Jay at jaycross.com

Share

Subscribe

Feedback

Print

< PREVIOUS

From the CEO

Feature

LX View

Hot Topic

Inside Story

Ideasphere

Mustn't Miss

Travel

Resources

About ASTD

NEXT >