

REFOCUS ON FRONTLINE TRAINING

DR. JAGDISH SHETH, CHARLES H. KELLSTADT CHAIR OF MARKETING, GOIZUETA BUSINESS SCHOOL, EMORY UNIVERSITY

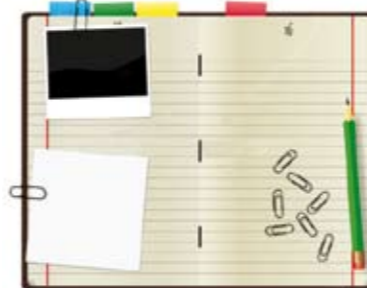


“Two changes have happened in terms of senior-level T&D,” Dr. Jagdish Sheth informs us. Organisations have recognised that they may have over-invested in training senior managers and top level executives, and under-invested in the frontline. To make amends, they are now focusing on frontline employees, particularly those in customer support and back-office. The other change has been the growing significance of technology in training. He explains, “Technology at the frontline level has been evolving rapidly and there is an increased focus on automation. This can be particularly seen in industries like banking, airlines, and telecom.”

While emphasising that training at the frontline has finally assumed importance, he also shares with us the four dimensions in which training has evolved for senior managers. First, it has become less about training and more about development. Second, in light of the various M&As that are taking place, there is a need for leaders to be able to manage a multi-cultural workforce. Third, there is a greater focus on action learning, as senior managers want to execute rather than just learn about new things. Fourth is the strong belief that Indian CEOs should be sent to renowned institutes abroad for leadership programmes. Dr. Sheth further adds that such programmes can be a great learning platform for managers as they give them the opportunity to learn from and interact with the best managers in the world.

About the cost-benefit of the virtual learning platform,

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Dr. Sheth emphasises that the use of technology makes the learning process affordable, and increases its reach to a global audience. “Technology has become a platform for product training. Moreover, one can arrange for foreign speakers,” he adds. Further, he believes

that companies are now looking to create corporate universities in order to avail the best of resources. They are designing curricula to suit the needs of their industry. He quotes the examples of Motorola University, GE’s Crotonville campus, and Infosys’s Mysore centre, calling the trend “insourcing, as opposed to outsourcing.”

Dr. Sheth opines that such structured training would be a revenue centre and not a cost centre. Large companies in the US have developed their own training facilities which they rent to other companies for a fee. “While earlier companies used to tie-up with academic institutions for summer programmes while the students were away on internships, the reverse is rapidly happening nowadays, that is, institutions are using the training facilities of organisations. However, this trend is yet to become commonplace in India,” he concludes. **thf**



NO SILOS FOR TODAY’S EMPLOYEES

DR. TERRY PAULSON, PSYCHOLOGIST, PROFESSIONAL SPEAKER, TRAINER AND AUTHOR

A leading psychologist and authority on change management, Dr. Terry Paulson believes that professional development and training have been challenged to contribute to the needs of organisations and individuals to cater to the rapidly changing environment. Security comes in continually retooling and refocusing on competencies to keep inventing the future. “We are seeing more calls for cross-training that can create new skill sets that mix and match expertise and experience. Do not limit me to any one silo; give me professionals who have branched out and created ways to add values” adds Dr. Paulson. Organisations are realising the value of international interdependence and want leaders with international experience, but also know how to relate to the unique needs in local markets. A prolific speaker for more than 30 years, he asserts that organisations are no longer looking for simple answers.

Dr. Paulson feels that future-focused organisations will commit to hiring selected retirees for upto 3 months of employment a year and keep them current on the strategic skills so they can keep pace with future challenges. In return, individuals will agree to bring their experience to strategic projects as needed on a contract basis. He finds webinars and video programmes useful but personally prefers face-to-face meetings as they can add more value and allows all attending to share the same experience, discuss issues and address problems. As cost containment continues to impact training, he wants training to address how the investment can support business goals. There is a need to focus on making a strategic difference for those attending rather than just focusing on transfer of learning.

He says it is time we embrace change as an opportunity to ensure training actually adds value. Taking an example of his book ‘The Optimism Advantage’, he says, “I am optimistic that the struggles we are going through now will make us stronger and better focused on a meaningful mission. The more obstacles we overcome in finding ways to add value to the organisations and professionals we serve, the better positioned we are for the future when economies rebound. Training needed a little cleaning house, but it is necessary than ever in inventing a future we can all be proud of.” **thf**

THERE IS A NEED TO MAKE A STRATEGIC DIFFERENCE, RATHER THAN JUST FOCUSING ON TRANSFER OF LEARNING TO ATTENDEES.