Business Perspectives on Managing World-Class Training

Training Industry QUARTERLY

A Training Industry, Inc. Ezine

Spring 2008

ADECCO

The Personal Touch to Personnel Training

Taking ROI to Level 6

CIGNA

A Healthy Outlook for Learning

IN THIS ISSUE

THOUGHT LEADERS

At the Editor's Desk
Guest editor Kaliym Islam offers "A Challenge to Training Professionals." Are you ready to accept it? 3

Winning Organizations Through People
By Dr. Michael O'Connor
Forget market conditions: External factors don't cause sluggish performance, poorly executed priorities do. 9

Before You Buy...
By Doug Harward
Whether you're buying a car or buying training, the same precaution applies: Keep your eyes wide open. 11

Learning Technologies
By Rick J. Crowley
When considering learning technologies, it's good to be strategic and selective, among other things. 13

Closing Arguments
By Tim Sosbe
Welcome to peer-previewed publishing, where the editorial process begins long before pen hits paper. 47

Training Industry QUARTERLY

Volume 1 Issue 1 Spring 2008

www.trainingindustry.com/TIQ

Publisher
Training Industry, Inc.
401 Harrison Oaks Blvd., Suite 300
Cary, NC 27513
(919) 653-4990

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Doug Harward *dharward@trainingindustry.com*

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
Ken Taylor *ktaylor@trainingindustry.com*

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Tim Sosbe *tsosbe@trainingindustry.com*

COPY EDITOR
Emily Tipping *editor@trainingindustry.com*

PRODUCTION/DESIGN
West Third Group
Greg Brooks, Grace Brooks *graceb@west-third.com*

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS
editor@trainingindustry.com

Rick Crowley
Doug Harward
Tracy Hollister
Kaliym Islam
Paul Leone
Dr. Michael O'Connor
Grant Ricketts
Tim Sosbe
Jeff Whitney

EDITORIAL BOARD
editor@trainingindustry.com

Jeneen Baret, *Manager of Information Technology IT Learning Group, Cisco Systems*

Jim Brolley, *Chief Learning Officer, Harley-Davidson*

Robert Campbell, *VP of Learning, Cerner Corp.*

Ed Cohen, *Senior Vice President, Satyam*

Rick Crowley, *Senior Director, Learning Systems, NetApp*

Kaliym Islam, *Vice President, Depository Trust & Clearing Corp.*

Karen Kocher, *Chief Learning Officer, Cigna*

Cathy Lawson, *Director, Learning Solutions Design & Development, Wal-Mart*

Paul Leone, *Manager, Leadership Development, American Express*

Alan Malinchak, *Director, ManTech University, ManTech International*

Scott Neeley, *National Training Manager, Newell Rubbermaid*

Irish Kennedy Smothers, *Chief Learning Officer, Mississippi Dept. of Employment Security*

Kee Meng Yeo, *Director, Global Learning and Development, Alticor*

TO OPTIMIZE PERFORMANCE, COMPANIES MAY NEED TO START DOING THINGS BACKWARDS

THE PROBLEM WITH 'COMMON SENSE' MANAGEMENT

If you're like most people, it might surprise you to learn that sluggish organizational performance is rarely the fault of shifting market conditions, stiff competition, lack of resources, or any of the other usual external or internal scapegoats. The truth is that most organizations don't manage these proven business priorities in a way that shapes sustained success.

Most companies start with a product or service idea, and, if it seems like a good one, focus on a "strategic" approach and tactical practices for implementing it. Once decided, the focus shifts to the people who will make their product or services idea a reality. In summary, the organization's priorities are, in their executed order: **Strategy**, followed by **Processes** and then **People**. In some cases, a final element eventually addressed is its efforts to determine and then implement its desired business **Culture**.

For the past 25 years I've studied the internal dynamics of consistently successful, high-performance organizations. One fact I've discovered is that "assuming" this common practice is the "correct" one is, in fact, truly asinine! Increasingly, businesses have begun to become more conscious that organizations that experience sustained success have focused — or refocused — their business priorities in a very different order.

Rather than the "backwards" **Strategy, Processes, People** and maybe eventually **Culture**, they begin by focusing or refocusing on a winning culture first. And, since the research reported in the books "Built to Last" and "Good to Great," they are now increasingly more open to the importance of getting the right people motivated/committed and capable/competent on their culture's bus.

A few of the more enlightened organizations have already discovered that the latest "business development fad," including the recycled quality/cost 'Six Sigma' Process, does not and cannot drive an organization's culture and people. Instead, it only makes one-time improvements — many of which, often years later, revert to prior wasteful habits because the sustained commitment to those shared business culture values by its people has not been fully integrated! This is because of the simple, but overwhelmingly unrecognized truism that it is people that create and sustain winning processes, not statistical tools and processes.

Winning Performers

Time and again during my decades of international business experience I have seen this fundamental truth, that the best processes become of little worth in the hands of uncommitted or incompetent performers. And, conversely, I've seen very different higher performers as well as average performers committed to the high performance standards of a winning culture find ways to discover and, more importantly, continuously execute as well as improve upon better processes.

And, once these driving success factors are in place and working well, organizations experience greater success with the business strategies they develop. Anyone who has worked in the area of strategy development is well aware that most company's that experience strategic success do so with strategies that are mostly doubles along with a few triples and home runs, not grand slam home runs. What does differentiate the winners from the losers in this performance area is their ability to successfully execute such strategies.

And it is this highest, most common and controllable risk that an organization can control through effectiveness in the areas of its own ***Culture, People and Processes.*** In summary, it is when all four of these organizational performance factors are aligned, working together to reinforce and strengthen one another, that the formula for sustained winning organizational performance is at work.

Dr. Michael O'Connor is a recognized thought leader, executive coach and founder of Life Associates, Inc. Michael is the co-author of "The Leadership Bridge Program (Situational Leadership II & DISC)" *and the book,* "The Leader Within." *Email Michael at* **droconnor@lifeassociatesinc.com**.