



## Business Article:

*Website Summary:*

### **The Value of Continuous Training**

*by Leon Enriquez*

**Reading Time:**  
5 minutes

**Reader Benefit:**

- ◆ Learn why you need to consider training on a continuous basis;
- ◆ Insights about how you can keep up with the need to keep your knowledge base up-to-date;
- ◆ Discover your own training or learning needs and how you can keep the habit of learning a skill that helps you to stay relevant in a world where rapid know-how obsolescence is a reality.

Training is fast becoming an activity where people go out to learn and bring back information to the workplace. That's because organisations are beginning to understand that the dynamics and flow of intellectual capital demand richer context. Change is an accepted norm in this new equation.

What then is the most effective way to facilitate learning? Considering the constraints of time and funding, it seems best to integrate learning within ongoing job responsibilities. This is a departure from the usual practice of taking time away from work in order to concentrate on learning.

This is really the reason why many organisations are re-assessing how people learn. Applied correctly, this learning process will become part of the way we perform knowledge work.

### **The Value of Continuous Training**

*by Leon A. Enriquez*

Businesses today cannot afford to remain static in a knowledge-based economy. The importance of continuous learning is a fundamental mindset we must embrace. And the mental attitude towards learning is the key factor that breeds success in a competitive marketplace.

What then is the most effective way to facilitate learning? Considering the constraints of time and funding, it seems best to integrate learning within ongoing job responsibilities. This is a departure from the usual practice of taking time away from work in order to concentrate on learning.



This is really the reason why many organisations are re-assessing how people learn. Applied correctly, this learning process will become part of the way we perform knowledge work.

For instance, a combination of multimedia technology, knowledge management systems and Internet-based technologies can help to deliver knowledge and training in ways that allow for differences in styles of learning and doing. Simulations and virtual environments can also help to integrate actual work into a focused learning process.

### ***Dynamic Learning Needs***

We can start by capturing experiences, and then take such experiences and put them into dynamic form. What follow are differing but complementary approaches that can be “*experience-based learning*” and “*learning from experience*”. Both aim to break down the walls between learning and working.

This situational approach differs from learning techniques of the recent past where training featured rote memory in a two-dimensional environment. Traditional training methods were successful because we had predictable performance expectations.

This is no longer the case in the new millennium. Today’s knowledge-intensive global economy rewards dynamic performance that keeps up with continuous change. E-businesses need to innovate fast, respond quickly to new challenges, and embrace risks to create value.

Rather than selling mass-produced products, knowledge companies must customise solutions to fit the specific needs of an increasingly diverse customer base. Intellectual capital and know-how, as embodied in company practices, processes, employees and products, is now a highly prized asset.

In this new situation, traditional training methods fall short in several major areas such as relevance, time and cost. Although traditional training methods may still be useful for teaching some tasks, they are generally no longer viewed as effective or appropriate in today’s business environment.



### ***Training Trends***

Training is fast becoming an activity where people go out to learn and bring back information to work. That's because organisations are beginning to understand that the dynamics and flow of intellectual capital demand richer context. Change is an accepted norm in this new equation.

Some of the most valuable knowledge within a company is essentially hidden or tacit. Such tacit knowledge resides in the experience and skills of human beings, and not in documents or databases.

Central to the new approaches to learning is the recognition that people are intelligent and resourceful, and that they already have acquired a lot of useful experience. But capturing and using such tacit knowledge to foster dynamic learning requires more than building a best-practices database.

Experiential learning is increasingly seen as the most appropriate learning methodology in the knowledge era. One of the biggest benefits resulting from experience-based learning is increased productivity. This is brought about by higher levels of knowledge retention in the minds of the knowledge workers. And this ultimately results in a greater transfer of knowledge into informed action.

### ***Complementary Approaches***

Two differing but complementary approaches to experiential learning are “*experience-based learning*” and “*learning from experience*”. Research shows that while the retention levels from traditional learning like lectures or reading are typically just three to five percent. In contrast, retention levels with experience-based learning have been known to reach 90 percent or better.

Experience-based learning has its roots in psychological theories about learning styles. Some people learn by reading and others by hearing, but many learn by doing. If that's the case, you want to emphasise learning by doing, and embed real work in the learning process.

Thus, virtual environments may be linked to a knowledge repository with collaboration tools that provide access to documents, success stories and insights gathered not from outside experts but from co-workers within the company. Such simulations are designed to steer you to problem areas; if you have difficulties or make a mistake, you are presented with a relevant “war story” from someone else in your company.



If the knowledge you are trying to share is hard to capture, e.g., sales expertise, etc. then experience-based learning may work better. All the materials available to you in real life are available virtually. In this virtual environment you make the call or write the letter and get feedback to see the consequences of your actions before picking up the physical phone.

For example, a detailed learner might want to understand the different pieces of a project prior to confronting the big picture. Other people may need to see the big picture before they drill down into details. Increasingly, the new economic era has displaced the need for ready-made learning programmes.

Clearly, building simulations is not about capturing static knowledge. Virtual environments let you experience what you are learning in the style in which you will apply it. And you are able to witness the impact of your actions and decisions. Moreover, the workflow is dynamic.

The other method, learning from experience, means “lessons learned”. This is rooted in the desire of enterprises not to make the same mistake over and over again. Ultimately, the goal is changing how people work.

We need to take stock and recognise that learning emerges from the actual experience of a team, a business unit or a community. This provides valuable knowledge that should be shared, lessons learned, and the role of intention highlighted.

As people become aware that work, such as attending a meeting, is also an opportunity for learning, they can begin to intentionally design their learning and ultimately how they work.

This process has attracted a great deal of interest because companies recognise that they don’t know how to build learning into their action cycles.

An organisation has to be conducive to learning, as well as providing a leadership model that trusts and empowers people. Change agents play an increasingly important role in coordinating and facilitating learning within the company. Change in such a situation is embraced as value-enhancing rather than a thing to be feared.



In this way, building an environment that promotes experiential learning can be a means to attract and retain the best and brightest employees. To be successful, a company must maintain this internal learning environment while never losing sight of your markets, competition and goals.

Experience enhances learning. And learning enhances experience. Experience pays. So does learning. Putting the two together – experience and learning – is where the challenge is up ahead in the knowledge economy.

In the end, the two essentially different but complementary approaches to experiential learning – “*experience-based learning*” and “*learning from experience*” – merit our serious focus if we are to manage and succeed despite the phenomenal changes that we encounter in this information-intensive world today.

#### ***About the Author***

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